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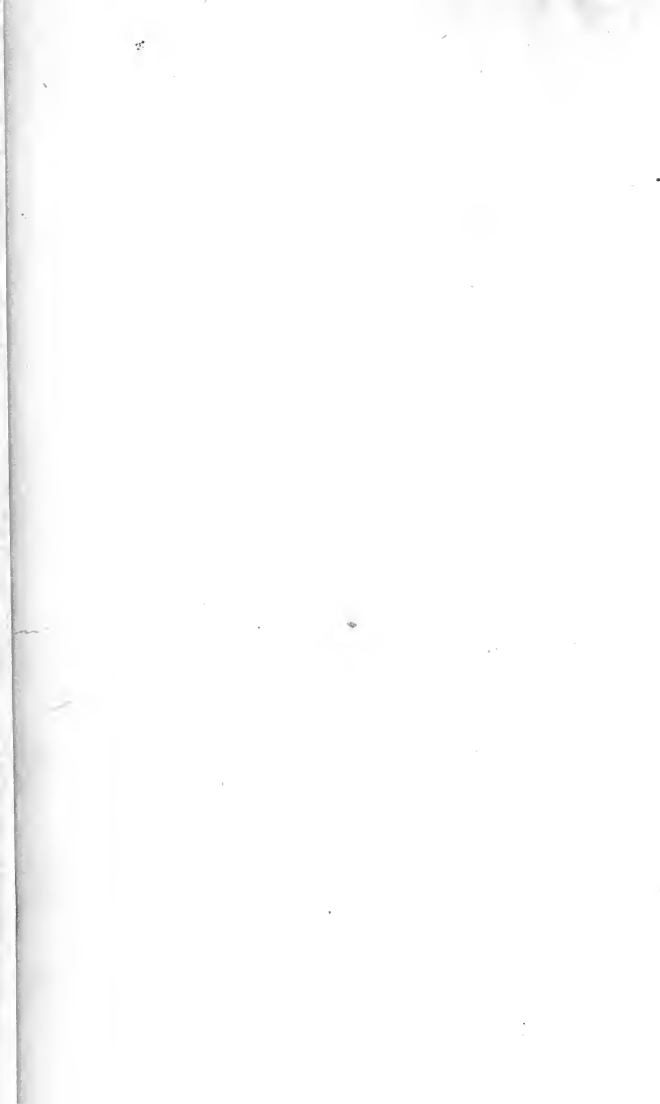


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PRACTICAL  
REFLECTIONS  
FOR  
EVERY DAY & THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

BY THE REV. ROBERT LANE,  
(ALIAS BOWES.)

ENLARGED AND EDITED  
BY THE REV. EDWARD PEACH.

*New and Improved Edition.*



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## PREFACE.

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THE Practical Reflections may be called one of our standard books of piety. During the space of little more than a century, ten editions have been published; and it is now in more general use, and meets with more universal approbation than at any former period. The concise manner in which the subjects are treated, renders it particularly useful for those who have not time for much reading; and the quantity of matter which is compressed into that small compass, makes it beneficial to those who have time to protract their meditations. The name of the pious author has hitherto been concealed. From the following account, however, sent to the editor by that learned and persevering investigator of Catholic biographical history, &c., the Rev. J. Kirk, of Lichfield, it may be presumed that the author was the Rev. Robert Lane, alias Bowes: "Robert Lane, alias Bowes, educated at Douay, lived at Hatherop, (the seat of the Webb family, near Fairford, Gloucestershire,) died at Bath, December 17, 1735. He was author, says Mr. Eyre, of Ushaw, in a letter of January 6, 1791, of the Practical Reflections.

The late Mr. John Lee, of Hammersmith, declared to me in the year 1815, and to the Rev. Mr. Hodgson, frequently, that his original MS. was at Hatherop, when he lived there. On the other hand, Mr. Darell, of Calehill, being asked by Bishop Poynter, (at my request) May 6th, 1821, whether he knew of any tradition in his family of the Practical Reflections being the work of Father Dorrell, answered, that he knew of none."

It has been a subject of regret, that the pious Author did not extend his labour, and provide a lesson for every day in the year. The work, as it is, is imperfect. It is only half a work, considering the purpose for which it was intended, and as it is expressed in the title page. The same lesson occurs twice in the year, and, what is still more exceptionable, proper lessons do not come in rotation for those seasons when they are particularly wanted, such as Advent, Lent, etc. These deficiencies have been felt by all who admire and make use of the work. The editor, hearing regrets of this kind expressed by the venerable Bishop of the Midland District, undertook the task of filling up the work, and making it complete. In the performance of the undertaking he has paid particular attention to the different seasons of the year, and after having collected together such reflections, scattered up and down in the original, as were appropriate to particular times, he has added others of his own, so as to have proper subjects, wherever proper subjects are

desirable. The other new lessons, required in order to complete the work, he has intermixed with the original ones, according as the subjects of them seemed to agree. The regular order, therefore, of the original has been changed; but not one lesson has been excluded nor has the order been changed more than necessary.

The execution of the work, the editor leaves to the judgment of others. He does not flatter himself that it will meet with any particular applause. He wishes only that the object of his labours may meet with approbation, and that the execution of it may not meet with the severity of criticism. At all events, the editor has this consolation—he has not spoiled a valuable book; for, if the present edition be not approved of, the original may still be had in its ancient form. His aim was to render a good book still more useful, and thereby contribute some little to the spiritual profit of his brethren. If he has not succeeded in this point, he may have cause to reprove himself for presumption, in daring to add to a work so universally approved of; but he will always reflect with pleasure on the purity of his intention.

With respect to the language of the original, the editor has not adopted the injudicious improvements of style which are to be found in the fifth and in the tenth editions. He has retained the amiable simplicity of the author, and has admitted no changes but what were necessary, either where the expressions had become obsolete, or where the language was incorrect, or where

the ideas were quaint and little calculated to excite good thoughts.

As to the doctrine contained in the new reflections, the editor leaves it to the decision of his superiors, declaring his readiness to recall what may not be strictly in unison with the doctrines of the Holy Catholic Church.

The editor has distinguished the additional reflections with a (\*) that nothing may be ascribed to the Rev. Author which is not his own, and which would not be worthy of him.

*Birmingham, Sept. 26, 1826.*

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# PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS.

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## ON THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD.

*Jan. 1.]—*OUR blessed Redeemer, when but eight days old, was *circumcised*, according to the Jewish law. What! our Lord circumcised! Does the Immaculate Lamb of God stoop to the humbling ceremony of circumcision! When I find my Saviour born an infant child, I behold and wonder. When I see him barbarously treated by the Jews, and dying on a cross, I wonder more; although I am convinced that innocence may suffer. But when I find him, like a miserable delinquent, lying under the knife of circumcision, what can I think? Dearest Saviour! there is nothing more odious to thee than sin; thou camest to redeem the world from sin; and wilt thou subject thyself to the infamy of a sinner?

Our Saviour is circumcised. Christians, let us circumcise our hearts, by retrenching sin, by cutting off all immediate occasions of sin, by bridling our passions, and by vigorously opposing the corrupt inclinations of nature.

Our Saviour is circumcised. O unparalleled example of the most profound humility! Have we not, poor worms of the earth, reason to be humbled at the sight of our sins? How do we endure the injuries and reproaches we meet with in the world? It is certain that we are sinners; but are we willing to be reputed as such?

Our Saviour is circumcised. O incomparable pattern of the most perfect obedience? Do we comply with the obligations

our respective callings? Are we obedient to superiors? Do we strictly observe the commands of God and his holy Church?

Examine yourselves, and see how far you have practised these necessary lessons which your *blessed original* teaches you in his circumcision. The *new year* is begun. Begin to renew a good life. "Cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light."—Rom. xiii. Humbly crave this grace of your sweetest Saviour. He can deny you nothing, now that he is circumcised for your transgressions.

ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE NEW YEAR.\*

*Jan. 2.*]—ANOTHER year is commenced. The Lord is pleased to spare his vineyard another season. He has vouchsafed to ordain that it should be again manured with his holy word and his holy sacraments, in hopes that it will, now at least, bring forth fruit in due season. Oh! how great are the mercies of the Lord! How great is his forbearance! After having fenced in this vineyard of our souls, by the graces purchased for us by his incarnation and death; after having provided means of rooting out the thorns and briars of depraved nature, by the ministry of the word delivered to us by his chosen stewards; after having prepared a wine-press for extracting the fruits of this his vineyard, by the holy sacraments which he instituted, particularly the inestimable sacrament of the altar; what more could be expected of him? It was our duty to correspond with these his graces; and, upon our refusal, we had nothing to expect but the severest judgments. Nevertheless, although we have not hitherto produced fruit according to expectation, he is willing to try us again. Oh! the patience, the longanimity of our Lord and master! But how long is this to continue? Ah! if we still refuse to listen to his voice, we have no other prospect than the accomplishment of his threats; namely, that he will order

the fence to be thrown down, that he will fill up the wine-press, and that, in the literal sense of the word, he will deliver us up to a reprobate sense. Dreadful are these threats; but more dreadful are the consequences.

Let us, therefore, put to profit the mercies which are again offered to us. Hearing his voice this day calling us to repentance, let us not harden our hearts. It may be that "it is now the eleventh hour, and that the night cometh on in which no man can work." Let us, then, accept the invitation, and cultivate the vineyard of our souls with joy. There is yet time to make reparation for the past; and, by superior diligence, to be found worthy of a reward equal to those who have borne "the burden of the day, and of the heats." But let us not delay, for the day is far spent.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved to begin now in good earnest. You will never have fewer difficulties to encounter in the beginning of a new life; and you will never have greater graces to assist you. Say, with St. Augustine, "Why defer till to-morrow? why not to-day? I know not that I shall be alive to-morrow."

#### ON RENOUNCING UNGODLINESS AND WORLDLY DESIRES.\*

*Jan. 3.]*—WHAT is the reason that the generality of men are more busily employed in the service of mammon than in the service of God? Is it not because they are strangers to the spirit of true piety? Alas! their souls are cold and indifferent about spiritual things. The warmth of the love of God is never felt by them. The *senses* are the only medium through which they look for enjoyments; and, of course, visible things alone engage their attention.

But how unworthy of a Christian is this *ungodliness*—these *worldly desires*! We are engaged by the master of the vineyard, to labour in his service alone; and from him we are to receive our reward. What will it profit us to neglect his

service, for the purpose of attending to the world? This, perhaps, is the last season that we shall have to work in the vineyard: and will our services for the world be taken into the account, when we come to the reckoning? Oh! no: we “cannot serve two masters.” We “shall hate the one and love the other;” or, we “shall hold to one, and despise the other.” We “cannot serve God and mammon.”—Matt. vi.

Renounce these two great enemies of your souls—*ungodliness and worldly desires*. Take off your affections from this miserable world: for all that is in the world is *the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life*. Turn to your God, who alone is capable of satisfying the cravings of your immortal souls. Seek the ways of piety, for in them only will you find true peace. Labour diligently in the service of God, for from him alone can you receive a reward that is worthy of you. The world is your enemy: never look up to it as your friend.

Examine yourselves, and let it be henceforward your desire to pay to God *your reasonable service*. You are engaged to him alone. Fulfil that engagement, and he will infuse into your souls such consolations, that *worldly desires* will make no impression on your hearts.

#### ON A NEW LIFE.

*Jan. 4.*]—WHY should we go on, year after year, in the ways of vanity and sin? Will such a life profit us in the end? “The wages of sin is death.”—Rom. vi. And shall we, for such wages as this, submit to the hard slavery of our passions, and refuse to enjoy the liberty which is the inheritance of the children of God. Oh! let us begin a new life with this new year. “We are not our own,” says the apostle.—1 Cor. vi. “We are bought with a great price.” Let us, then, “give to God what belongs to God.” Let us “glorify and bear God in our bodies. The grace of God our Saviour hath

appeared to all men" (Tit. ii.), *instructing us* in the way in which we ought to walk. Jesus has shed his blood for us, for the express purpose of making us "an acceptable people, a pursuer of good works."—Ibid. Let us arise without delay. Jesus is walking before us, carrying his cross. Let us gird our loins, and walk cheerfully after him. The paths in which he walks are rugged and full of thorns: but let us fix our eyes on the cheering prospect to which these paths lead. There we behold crowns of glory, and joys unmixed with sorrow. There we behold the bosom of our God open to receive us, and the immeasurable expanse of a happy eternity terminating the scene.

Oh, cheating world! thou shalt never more engage my affections. Thou hast presented before me no other prospect but death. I will not walk in thy paths. I will take up my cross, and walk in that path which will lead me to the possession of my God. There I have a prospect which will cheer the days of my mortality. There I shall find encouragement to press forward, in spite of every obstacle, until I obtain possession of my crown.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved to begin this new year with increased fervour. You cannot love God too much; nor can you serve him too faithfully. Hitherto, probably, you have been deficient in these points. Love him and serve him more faithfully for the time to come, and your reward shall be exceedingly great hereafter.

ON LIVING SOBERLY, AND JUSTLY, AND GODLY, IN THIS  
WORLD.\*

*Jan. 5.]—*THIS is the will of God, that "we live soberly, and justly, and godly, in this world."—Tit. ii. We live *soberly*, when we keep our passions in subjection, and check every disorderly inclination. We live *justly*, when we observe the rules of charity and justice to our neighbour, not injuring

him either in thought, word, or deed, and doing him all the good in our power. We live *godly*, when we perform all the duties which we owe to God, loving him with our whole hearts, and seeking to promote his honour and glory in all things, and at all times. These are the three great branches of our duty. By fulfilling these can we alone be prepared for that “blessed hope, and the coming of the glory of that great God, and our Saviour, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works.”—Tit. ii.

Oh! let us weigh well this important lesson. Our duty is three-fold. The fulfilment of one will not avail us, unless we fulfil the others. To live *godly* will not avail us, unless, at the same time, we live *soberly and justly*. In the same manner, were we to live *soberly*, that is, to avoid every kind of excess, and to be exact and orderly in all our moral conduct; were we, likewise, to live *justly*, that is, to do to others, in all things, as we would be done by, it would profit us nothing to salvation, unless, at the same time, we lived *godly*—that is, unless we loved God with our whole hearts, and preferred his honour and glory before all other things.

How happy is the Christian who labours faithfully in the discharge of each of these duties! How unhappy is he, who separates what God has joined together, and expects to save his soul at the time that he is deficient in the practice of one or other of these virtues! Oh! let us attend strictly to them all: and then we shall become truly wise and perfect, and the peace of God will be established in our souls.

Examine yourselves, and see what deficiency there has been in the practice of these three virtues during your past lives. Make up the deficiency without delay; and, by superior diligence for the time to come, strive to prepare yourselves for the coming of your Lord in glory.

## ON THE EPIPHANY.

*Jan. 6.]*—No sooner had Jesus Christ come into the world, than he thought of our salvation. A star appears to the Kings of the East, and announces the birth of the world's Redeemer. Resolved not to rest till they found their Saviour, they immediately set forward in search of him. Happy resolution! God calls upon us, by his inspirations, every moment of our lives; but do we follow his calls?

In the persons of these three kings, we were called to the faith. Great princes, whither go you in such haste? Reflect upon the length and difficulties of your journey. Will you dare to proclaim a new-born king in the court of a bloody and jealous tyrant? Is not your safe return home very doubtful? Will you hazard the loss of a crown, wife, children, and all that is dear to you? Nothing could detain them. They boldly entered the court of Herod, demanding "where is he that is born King of the Jews?"—Matt. ii. Undaunted courage! Have we been half so zealous in finding out heaven? Sometimes, I own, we have good resolutions: but does not almost every silly humour and trifling vanity put them by? We are not upon uncertainties, like the three kings. We know that God is our Lord, and where he is to be found: and have we the courage to seek and serve him?

The kings are come to Bethlehem, and what do they find? A stable, a manger, straw, a poor woman, a weeping babe. They are not surprised. On the contrary, falling on their knees, they adore the child; they acknowledge him for their God, their king, and their Redeemer. Unshaken faith! What is our faith? Has it not wavered in poverty, and yielded under persecution? Is it a faith working by charity in Jesus Christ? This is the only faith that will save us.

Examine yourselves, and in all occurrences of life endeavour

to imitate the faith, courage, and resolution of the wise men; for, by so doing, you will be worthy to partake in this great festival—the Christmas-day of the Gentiles.

#### ON THE OFFERINGS OF THE WISE MEN.

*Jan. 7.]*—THE pious kings were not scandalised at the mean condition in which they found Jesus. They had a lively faith of his being their Lord. They saw, under his humility, the brightest glory—under his feebleness, an almighty power. They became, upon the spot, Christians, and perfect Christians. Alas! we were long ago called to Christianity, and yet how cold, how slothful, how imperfect we are!

On their bended knees they adore their Saviour. They make him an early offering of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They offer him *gold* in acknowledgment that he is their *king*; they present him *frankincense*, owning him to be their *God*; and *myrrh*, in token of his being a *mortal man*. Has our faith been thus active? Does it break forth into good works? “Lord, increase my faith.”—Luke, xvii.

Let us, with these good princes, make a daily offering to God of the *gold* of *charity*: that is, let us love him with all our hearts, and our neighbours as ourselves; and let us rather be prepared to die than rebel against him by sin. Let us offer him the *incense* of our *prayers*: for our manifold weaknesses, and the enemies of our souls, which surround us on every side, tell us *we must pray*. Let us not fail to offer him the *myrrh* of *penance*: because our repeated sins, the justice of God, and our eternal happiness, call upon us to do penance.

Examine yourselves; and, henceforward, at least, let your lives be a constant oblation of *gold*, *frankincense*, and *myrrh*, to the infant Jesus. On this day you were called to the faith of Christ. Do your utmost to make a suitable return for so great a mercy. Pray for the souls that still remain in the shades of infidelity.



## ON THE OFFERING OF GOLD PRESENTED BY THE WISE MEN.\*

*Jan. 8.]*—THE wise men presented *gold* to their new-born Saviour, as a testimony of their allegiance to him as their king. The splendours of the court of Herod attracted not their notice. They made no inquiries concerning the heir apparent of the reigning monarch. Jesus alone they sought: and no sooner did they appear in his presence than, falling down, they adored him. The abject state of poverty and weakness, in which they found him, did not diminish their respect. They acknowledged him for their king, at the time when the world knew him not, and they presented him their gold.

Can we say that we give testimony of our allegiance, like the wise men? Jesus is now publicly acknowledged as the Messiah—the Prince of Peace—the Father of the world to come: and do we truly and sincerely at all times acknowledge him for our king? Is it to him alone that we pay the tribute of our gold? Alas! the pomp of vanities, the allurements of sensuality, the violence of passion, engage our attention; and too frequently do we squander away, in pursuit of them, that gold which our king justly claims as his own due. Oh! Christians, walk worthy of your vocation, and be not Christians in name only. Your Saviour, indeed, is not now to be seen in the state of poverty. He himself stands not in need of your goods. But he has left poor members behind: and, in the persons of the poor, he presents himself before you. Offer him, then, the tribute of your gold, cheerfully and piously: for he has declared that what is done to the poor he considers as done to himself.

Examine what offerings you have hitherto made to your infant Saviour, and compare them with that part of your substance which you have devoted to the service of the world and of your passions. If the latter have received an undue

share, retrench for the time to come, and enlarge your offerings to the true king of your souls, with cheerful liberality.

ON THE OFFERING OF FRANKINCENSE.\*

*Jan. 9.*]—THE wise men presented *frankincense* to their new-born Saviour, as an acknowledgment of his *Divinity*. The humble appearance of a weeping, shivering infant, did not shake their faith. The star was to them a sufficient testimony. They saw through the veil with which he was clothed, and they freely owned him for their God. The Jews, his chosen people, would not acknowledge him for their Messiah, even when they saw him work such wonders as no man before him had ever wrought. They said: “Who is this man? We know not whence he is.”—John, ix. Although the Scriptures had foretold of him, and had described his birth, the time of his birth, and the place of his birth, as well as the various circumstances of his life and passion, they nevertheless rejected him as an impostor, and crucified him. The wise men saw him only as an infant in a manger: their only testimony of his divine origin was a silent star: and yet they believed, and offered the tribute of frankincense with sincere hearts. How often are the gifts of God abused by those who receive the most! and how justly are such wicked servants rejected, in order to make room for others, who will correspond with his graces!

In the times in which we live, we have the testimony of ages and nations, in addition to the testimonies which were given to the Jews. We believe these testimonies, and we acknowledge him to be “the desired of all nations; the Emmanuel, or God with us.” And can we have anything to plead in our favour, if, after all, we reject and crucify him again, by wilful sin? Are not the Jews innocent, when compared with us? Oh! let us not offend him any more: for,

although he prayed for the Jews, who crucified him, his prayers will not be applicable to us. He cannot say: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."—Luke, xxiii.

Examine yourselves, and see what is your guilt in this respect. You believe him to be your *Saviour*, your *Jesus*, and your *God*. Adore him as such: and never more prefer the gratification of your passions before his love and service.

#### ON THE OFFERING OF MYRRH.\*

*Jan 10.*]—THE wise men were not shocked at the humble form in which they found their new-born king and Saviour. They readily believed the mystery of the incarnation; and they united myrrh with their other offerings, as an acknowledgment of their belief that God was made man—even *mortal* man, like unto us. Oh! let us imitate these holy souls, and humbly offer our myrrh to our infant Jesus, with sincere faith. Jesus is no longer clothed with the robes of mortality. He has penetrated the clouds, and withdrawn himself from the sight of men. But he presents himself before us on our altars, veiled under the form of bread and wine. There let us adore him, like the wise men, and present him our myrrh, as an acknowledgment of our belief of the real presence of his divinity, as well as of his humanity.

Myrrh possesses the property of preserving bodies from corruption, and it is bitter to the taste. In a mystical sense it signifies mortification and self-denial. Tainted as our souls are with sin, let us apply to them this myrrh, before we offer them to our Lord and judge. Let us deny ourselves. Let us mortify our disorderly inclinations. Let us curb and conquer our passions. This myrrh may be bitter to the taste; that is, these works may be painful to flesh and blood: but to deny and hate ourselves is one of the principal duties of the gospel. What will the "flesh profit" us? "It is the spirit that quickeneth and giveth life."—John, vi. Our souls must be

renewed by penance, or they will be dead in the sight of God. Oh! let us, then, apply this myrrh to our souls with a liberal hand, and we may confidently hope that he, who spared not his own flesh for the love of us, will deign to accept our offering, and amply reward us hereafter for the few sufferings which we have endured for his sake.

Examine whether you have hitherto offered to God the myrrh of humble faith, and applied to your souls the myrrh of self-denial. Be attentive to these points. "My hands have distilled myrrh," says the Spouse in the Canticles.—Cant. iii. May your hearts distil the myrrh of mortification and penance, that your bodies may be presented to God *a living sacrifice*.

#### ON THE END OF MAN.

*Jan. 11.]—The end of man is to serve God.* If it were asked, where we were a hundred years ago, our answer would be: No where. What were we? Nothing. Who raised us out of the dark abyss of nothing? God. And why did he do it? To the end that we should serve him. For this end he has created us to the likeness of himself; for this end he has redeemed us with the price of his blood; for this end he has called us to the true faith from amidst thousands, who unhappily perish. Pursuant to this end, he infuses into our souls the dews of heaven, and ceases not to heap upon us innumerable blessings. And, after all these blessings, do we truly serve him? Do we not rather serve the world, vanity, and sin, and everything else, before our good God?

That we were created to serve God, is a truth which we imbibed from our very cradles. And yet, notwithstanding this early knowledge of our duty, what are our lives? Do not our actions speak in favour of the world? Do not its corrupt maxims gain a greater ascendancy over us than the maxims of the gospel? Ah! when we reflect how generally

men's busy thoughts are bent upon the follies of a deluding world—when we reflect, that, on all occasions, they follow the suggestions of a depraved nature—when we reflect how seldom they think of another life—of God—or heaven, what are we to conclude?

O God! deliver us from this unhappy blindness. May our last and only end be always before our eyes, that we may, in love and righteousness, faithfully “serve thee all the days of our lives.”—Luke, i. Grant that we may walk in the way of thy commandments, and that we may dread nothing more than to sin against thee.

Examine yourselves, and see how far you answer the end of your creation. You see that the end of man is *to serve God*. Let, therefore, each thought and action of your life be directed to this end. Whenever you are tempted, say to yourself: *I came into the world to serve God, and shall I offend him by a mortal sin?*

#### ON SERVING GOD.

*Jan. 12.]*—THERE is nothing more noble than to serve God. To serve him, is to reign. We value ourselves on our allegiance to our prince. We are ready to hazard life and fortune to signalize ourselves in his service. And is not God the greatest of princes? We are willing to serve a good *friend*, and to promote his interest in the most effectual manner. And is not God the *best* of friends? He is: therefore, let us serve him. He claims a right to our service by all manner of titles: consequently, it must be a notorious injustice not to serve him. Millions are lost on account of this injustice. Sweet Jesus! grant that it prove not our misfortune.

When we reflect on the mortified lives of *recluses*: when we view their poverty, disciplines, and hair shirts; when we behold the racks and tortures of the *martyrs*, they seem to us to be the most unhappy people on earth. But, alas! how are

we deceived! Under the appearance of their *seeming* miseries, they are, of all, the most happy, because God is their comfort, because their thoughts repose in God, who alone is able to fill their hearts. “Lord, thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in thee.”—St. Aug.

Heaven and earth unanimously concur to the magnifying their Lord by their incessant praises: and shall we alone remain silent, amidst the universal voice of nature? O God! we will confess thy glorious name: our lives henceforward shall express thy praises. We will praise thee by an utter detestation of sin, by an early and vigorous application to virtue. We will praise thee in our daily and recollected prayers, and by frequently and worthily receiving thy sacraments. We will praise thee, by adoring thy *body* in the Blessed Eucharist, and by an obsequious assent to thy revealed doctrines. We will praise thee in thought, word, and deed. The course of our lives shall be a *perpetual sacrifice of praise*.

Examine yourselves, and let these be your serious resolutions. If you have deserted the service of God, return back with speed. Be not basely enslaved to those creatures which were created for your service. Spend your lives in the service of your Lord. Your happiness here, and eternal happiness hereafter, depends upon it. In order thereto, earnestly sue for *divine grace*, without which you can do nothing.

#### ON THE DIGNITY OF A CHRISTIAN.

*Jan. 13.*]—EVERY Christian is a child of God. What Christ is by *nature*, the Christian is by *adoption*. In baptism we receive this noble spirit, by virtue whereof we have a title to heaven, and enjoy the privilege of calling God *our father*. Is there anything more honourable than to be the *son* of God? What are our lives? Do they answer this glorious character? Are we dutiful children? We are in the highest degree ungrateful, if we do not obey.

The Christian, as such, is a member of Jesus Christ: he is engrafted into him. This was effected in baptism: and are we so still? Alas! we cannot affirm it, when our lives are so unlike that of our blessed original. Where is that self-denial, those voluntary mortifications, which our Saviour practised? Where is his humility, patience, and resignation? Where is that love of God and our neighbour, which, like a pure fire, burnt deep in his sacred breast?

A Christian is the living temple of the Holy Ghost. The third person of the blessed Trinity resides in his heart. He infuses his graces into his soul. He is ready, on all occasions, to come to his assistance, and by a thousand inspirations, reminds him of salvation. We bear the name of *Christian*, but do we bear it in our hearts? Are they not stained with sin? Are they decorated with virtue? Are they a suitable habitation for the Divine Spirit? Ah! how boundless a mercy it is, for wretched man to be raised to the dignity of the *son* of God—of a member and brother of Jesus Christ—of the living temple of the Holy Ghost! “O Christian, be mindful of thy dignity; and, since thou art elevated to the participation of the divine nature, never degenerate therefrom by an unworthy conversation.”—St. Leo.

Examine yourselves, and let it be your chief care to correspond faithfully with the *dignity* of a Christian. The name of Christian will avail you nothing, if your lives be unchristian: it will rather contribute to your greater condemnation.

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

### ON THE NAME OF JESUS.

*Jan. 14.]*—“He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”—Matt. xxiii. Christ, in his circumcision, humbled himself to the degree of a sinner, the lowest degree of humiliation imaginable: wherefore he is exalted, and dignified with the

adorable name of *Jesus*—a name, at the sound whereof every creature in heaven, earth, and hell, shall bend their knees—a name of unspeakable comfort to the saints, and of terror to the devils—a name, which implies the redemption of mankind, and the happiness of heaven.

Are we oppressed with affliction? Let us think on *Jesus*: “I will rejoice in God, my *Jesus*.”—Habac. iii. Are we subject to repeated failings? Let *Jesus* be our comfort: *Sweet Jesus, comfort me*. Do our unruly passions acquire strength? Let us speedily curb them with the name of *Jesus*: *Dear Jesus help me*. Are we assaulted by desperate temptations? Let us arm ourselves with the name of *Jesus*: *O Jesus save me*. Are we ready to sink under the weight of our offences? Let us trust in the sacred name of *Jesus*: *Good Jesus, for thy name’s sake, be to me a Jesus*.

What did Christ leave undone to complete the character of a Saviour? Was not every action of his life directed to our salvation? Did not his words, and purest thoughts, concur to the same? Did he not labour day and night in the conversion of souls? Has he not shed his blood for us? We are Christians: we received this honourable distinction at our baptism: are our lives conformable to this character?

Examine yourselves, and see what benefit you have derived from the name of *Jesus*. Beware of profaning it. Engrave it on your hearts. Let it sweeten your thoughts. Let all your actions be seasoned with the name of *Jesus*. In the deepest affliction, let *Jesus* be your comfort. “There is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby they may be saved.”—Acts. iv.

#### ON THE DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN.

*Jan. 15.*]—“DECLINE from evil and do good.”—Ps. xxxiii. In these few words of the royal prophet is comprised the whole duty of a Christian. *Decline from evil*: nothing renders



us enemies to God, and slaves to the devil—nothing robs us of heaven, and involves us for ever in the flames of hell, but the unhappy evil, *sin*. God is our *father*: can we then rebel against him? Dare we, poor wretches, fly in the face of uncontrollable Majesty? Christ is our *brother*: shall we trample under foot that *precious blood*, which he has so lovingly shed for us? The Holy Ghost is our *guest*: shall we banish him from our hearts by mortal sin? Ah! let it not be said that we ever proved thus ungrateful.

*Do good.* There is no gaining heaven without *good works*. “Faith is dead without them” (Jam. ii.), and can never save us unless it “works by charity in Jesus Christ.”—Gal. v. The Christian, therefore, must do good: he must practise virtue: he must be humble of heart, if he would be acceptable to God: and surely our manifold weaknesses, our insufficiency in everything, are abundant motives for laying a solid foundation of humility. The Christian must be patient: it is “by patience that he is to possess his soul.”—Luke, xxi. Alas! has not our innocent Lord suffered more than we either do or can suffer? Do not our transgressions loudly and justly importune us to suffer a hundred times more than we have already done?

The Christian must be *chaste*, *meek*, and *poor*, even in the midst of riches: Christ himself has pronounced them blessed.—Matt. v. ‘It is his duty to be in charity with every neighbour, otherwise he cannot be his “disciple.”’—John, xiii. How can we fail to love our neighbour when we consider that he is the image of our great God, redeemed by the sacred blood of his Son, fellow member with ourselves, and our own flesh?

Examine yourselves, and be resolved duly to comply with these Christian obligations. If a deceitful world labour to seduce you, tell it that you are a *Christain*, and that such you will die. If self-love and your passions press strongly upon you, regard them not. Tell them that they *must* be curbed. Tell them that you are a *soldier of Jesus Christ*.

## ON THE CHARACTER OF A CHRISTIAN.

*Jan. 16.*]—EVERY Christian is a *religious person* of the best of orders, namely, that of Jesus Christ himself. He has a *rule*, a *habit*, and a *founder*. He has *vows* and *exercises*. Christ is the *founder* of the Christian order. Innocence and sanctity form the *habit*. The promises made in baptism are the solemn *vows*. The gospel is the *rule*; and prayer, penance, and good works are the regular *exercises*. Can we say that we have been good members of this our order, when our lives are so irregular, and so full of failings? when we indulge in sin, and are negligently slothful in the way of virtue?

The good Christian *contemns the world*. It is not his chief pleasure to employ his thoughts on the affairs of this life. Like an exile in a foreign country, he impatiently longs for a sight of the place which gave him birth. He is never dejected at adverse fortune, nor vainly puffed up with the sweets of prosperity. The loss of goods does not afflict him, because he knows that he came naked into the world, and that in the same state he shall leave it. The vain desires of honour engage not his heart, because his *conversation* is in heaven. No injury or affront is capable of provoking him, because he is a good Christian: and let death come when it will, it is always welcome. Is it so with us?

*His heart is in heaven*. The only thing that troubles him on earth, is the great distance he is at from his blessed country: he prays, therefore: and his repeated prayer is: "Thy kingdom come."—Matt. vi. He prays in the words of David: "My God, as the hart pants after the fountains of water, so doth my soul pant after thee. When shall I appear before my God! One thing I desire of thee, O Lord, that I may dwell in thy house, and behold thy beauty."—Ps. xli. He laments; he sighs; he wishes to be there. Is it so with us? Are our hearts fixed on heaven? Do we languish after this blessed country?

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to live up to the *character* of a Christian. In order thereto, disengage your hearts from a sinful world, and fix them on heaven. By the grace of God you may effect it. Ask it, therefore, with all humility, and remember, that the name of Christian, if duly complied with, will add lustre to your *glory*; but if abused, will contribute to your *severer condemnation*.

ON THE TRUE SPIRIT OF A CHRISTIAN.\*

*Jan. 17.]*—WE ought to consider the things of this world as unworthy of our affections, and consequently, as unworthy of our desires. This world and the world to come are in opposition to each other. We cannot court them both. We cannot fix our affections on one, without renouncing the other. Let us then imbibe the spirit of a true Christian, and make that choice between this world and the next, which we shall wish to have made, when this world is taken from us.

The true Christian uses this world as if he used it not. He despises all that passes with time. He turns away from those things which cannot satisfy the cravings of an immortal soul. He seeks after the good things of eternity—things concealed at present from his sight, but which alone are real, substantial, and permanent. He is cheerful and resigned under all trials. He is determined and persevering in his endeavours to overcome every obstacle that opposes his progress towards heaven. He knows that the Lord is his protector, and that, as long as he adheres to him, he is certain of victory.

O God! come to my assistance, and instil into my soul that spirit, which is the characteristic spirit of thy disciples. Why should I look to the things of this world for happiness? They may provide abundant means of gratifying my passions, and flattering my vanity; but this is not happiness. I will rather look up to thee, for in thee alone true happiness is to

be found. I do not, indeed, see the good things of eternity. But thy word is sufficient for me; and since thy word has declared, that a crown of immortal glory is awaiting me hereafter, I will, with the help of thy grace, fulfil thy holy will in all things, and sigh only to be dissolved, and to be with thee.

Examine how far you are animated with this spirit. Be no longer tied down to the world. Give yourselves entirely to him, who has given himself for you in this world, and who will give himself to you eternally in the next.

#### ON WALKING IN THE WAYS OF GOD.\*

*Jan. 18.*]—THE true Christian makes it his study to walk always in the ways of God. But what is it *to walk in the ways of God*? *To walk in the ways of God*, is to observe his holy law, both as it is delivered to us in the holy Scripture, and as it is promulgated by the precepts and counsels of the church. *To walk in the ways of God*, is to listen carefully to the interior inspirations, and to follow minutely the secret motions of the Holy Spirit. *To walk in the ways of God*, is to imitate the example of our divine model, who is, “the way, the truth, and the life.”—John, xiv. *To walk in the ways of God*, is to have a knowledge of our weakness, and to be sincerely convinced of our own nothingness; to entertain a contempt of the world, and to despise all that the world courts and admires. *To walk in the ways of God*, is to love retirement and prayer, and patiently to submit to humiliations, sufferings, and poverty. These are *the ways of God*. The saints knew them; they walked in them, and they were led by them to the abodes of eternal rest.

Alas! how few are there that walk in them now a-days! How few, that seem to know what the ways of God are! How few, that seem to feel solicitude, even for a moment, to

discover where they are to be found! Oh! what is become of the true spirit of a Christian!

Examine whether you have seriously studied this subject. Be no longer the children of the world. The ways of God are the only ways by which you can get to heaven. Study them without delay, and enter into them with courage and resolution; for, "they who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction."—1 Thess. i.

ALL CREATED THINGS OUGHT TO RAISE OUR HEARTS TO GOD.\*

*Reflection the First.*

*Jan. 19.*]—WHAT abundant subjects of contemplation are to be found in the varied and magnificent works of the creation! Heathens contemplated them with astonishment; and shall Christians view them with indifference? Christians are gifted with knowledge, superior to what the heathens possessed. To them, consequently, the works of the creation ought to present a book of more sublime morality, and of more serious reflection.

The beauty of the heavens, and the regular courses of the sun, moon, and stars, ought to raise up their thoughts to the great Creator, to draw their affections from earthly things, and to cause them to look up to the mansions above, where greater things than these are prepared for their contemplation for endless ages.

The earth, likewise, is full of wonders, and everything thereon ought to present an instructive lesson. The waters of the ocean, which are sometimes tossed about by storms, at other times in a perfect calm, but which are always confined within their boundaries, ought to remind them of the boundaries within which the violence of passion ought to be confined, in the midst of the tempests to which they are liable. The vegetative part of the creation, which, during winter,

appears to be devoid of life, but which, when spring returns, is renovated, and again clothed with the beauties of its former verdure, ought to remind them of the duty of a perpetual renovation of their fervour, and of the glories with which their bodies will be clothed, after the general resurrection. “The birds of the air, which are fed, although they neither sow nor reap, and the lilies of the field, which are decorated, although they neither card nor spin” (Matt. vi.), ought to remind them of the paternal providence of the Creator, and cause them to place their whole trust and confidence in him. Thus, ought the works of the creation to raise our hearts to God, and to advance us in the ways of virtue.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour henceforward to turn all things to your spiritual profit. A pious and reflecting mind will find cause, in the minutest works of the creation, to turn to God, and to express astonishment at his omnipotence and love. Let it be your solicitude to do the same.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.\*

*Reflection the Second.*

*Jan. 20.]*—“WHAT will it profit thee,” said the pious à Kempis, “to discourse learnedly of the Trinity, if thou art void of humility, by which thou art displeasing to the Trinity?”—*Foll. of Chr. B. i.* In the same manner we may say, what will it profit us to discourse learnedly of the courses of the sun, moon, and stars—of the nature of this earth on which we dwell, and of all the productions which it brings forth, either on land or in the sea, if, at the same time, we do not take occasion, from these things, to raise our hearts and thoughts to him, who is the creator and preserver of them?

These things were not created for the sole purpose of being useful to us in this world, for God could have supplied all our wants without all this magnificent display of omnipotence.

Neither were they created for the useless purpose of exciting admiration, or of inducing us to contemplate them, merely with the view of exercising our abilities, and displaying our penetration, in giving learned disquisitions concerning them. The Almighty had higher objects in view: he involved in mystery the nature and the formation of all and every part of his works, for the purpose of convincing us that the extent of *human understanding* is circumscribed within certain boundaries. He was willing to prove to us that, as earthly things are far above our comprehension, we ought most readily to submit our understanding to the belief of heavenly things, which he has been pleased to reveal to us, how far soever they may be elevated above the level of our reason.

He, likewise, clothed his works in this world with inexpressible beauty, for the purpose of convincing us, that, if he is pleased to decorate the place of our exile in such a manner, he has beauties and wonders of infinitely greater magnificence and splendour in those blessed abodes, where he himself will be the object of our contemplation for endless ages.

These were noble objects, objects worthy of the goodness and mercy of the Almighty; objects which give dignity to the exalted motives for which man was created.

Examine yourselves, and see in what manner you have hitherto contemplated the works of the creation. Henceforward, when you view the magnificent parts of nature—the heavens, or when you see the most trivial productions of nature on the earth, raise up your heart to the great Creator, and express an ardent desire to be prepared for the contemplation of the wonders which are to be found in the eternal abodes of Sion.

HOW LITTLE IS GOD KNOWN IN THE WORLD!\*

[Jan. 21.]—ALTHOUGH all created things ought to raise up our hearts to God, still, how little is God known in the world!

How few are there to be found who seek God in all things! how few, who reflect, as they ought to do, upon his being always present with them! how few, who retire from time to time into the interior closets of their hearts, to converse familiarly with him! How few are there to be found, who make him the subject of their conversation, or who court the society of those who delight in discoursing on subjects of piety and divine love! Alas! whence comes this forgetfulness of him, who alone is worthy of our thoughts?

We see that men apply themselves with ardour to every science, excepting only the science of knowing God. We see that they attend to the concerns of the world, form their plans—plans which require days and weeks of deep study and application—and persevere, with unwearied assiduity, in their efforts to ensure success: and yet, notwithstanding they know that there is an all-ruling providence over them, and that success is to come from him alone, never once turn their thoughts towards him, consult his will, or act as if they were, in any manner, dependant on him.

How many, likewise, are there of regular Christians, who think but little of God, who seldom speak of him, and whose words, when a pious subject is introduced, are so cold, so embarrassed, as to show that they do not come from the heart. Even in men of learning, devoted to the ministry, men, whose office it is to impart to the faithful the words of life, and to enkindle in their souls the flames of heavenly love, how little do we see of that interior knowledge, which the spirit of love inspires! In their discourses, there are many words, but little substance; much rhetorical art, but little unction; elegant sentences, and beautiful periods, but little insinuation. Such preachers please the ear, but they touch not the heart. They have many hearers, but few converts. Oh! when will God be more known in this wretched world!

Examine whether you turn to God at all times, and on all occasions. Reflect that, if you know not God in this world,



that is, if your heart be not centered in God by love, you will never possess him hereafter.

HOW LITTLE IS GOD SERVED BY THE WORLD!\*

*Jan. 22.*]—“WHAT is man, that thou shouldst have regard to him, or the son of man, that thou shouldst cast an eye upon him?”—Ps. cxliii. These were the humble sentiments of the royal prophet. But alas! the world is a stranger to these sentiments. The world seems to think that it is no condescension on the part of God, to cast an eye on man. On the contrary, the world seems to think, that God is bound in *justice* to provide for man, and to consult his temporal well-being in all things. If this were not the case, would there be those murmurings and complaints in adversity, which we hear? or that impatience and discontent in privations and sufferings, which we witness?

The world, moreover, seems to think that men have something of more importance to attend to than to devote themselves wholly to the service of their Creator. When a man, animated with the Spirit of God, sells all he has, and gives it to the poor, renounces the society of men, and shuts himself up in close retirement with his God, the world exclaims against him as a fool, and condemns his conduct in the severest terms. The world seems to say, in opposition to the royal prophet: “What is God, that man should have such regard to him; or the Son of God, that man should devote himself wholly to him?”

Oh! were it possible that the heart of man could be divided, and that God would be content with only a small portion of it; that is, were it possible to be a true servant of God, at the time that our desires, our solitudes, and affections, are chiefly centered in the world; or were it possible to be a true disciple of Jesus, without renouncing ourselves, and taking up our cross and following him; then God would not be a stranger

in the midst of his people. But this arrangement is impossible. God is the great *All*: and he will be acknowledged and treated as such. He is *Alpha* and *Omega*, the *beginning* and the *end*; and the man who presumes to set up his own will, his own ease, or anything created, as his *Alpha* or *Omega*, thereby acknowledges that he knows not God, because he does not acknowledge in him that supreme dominion which essentially belongs to him.

Examine yourselves, and let it be your study to give to God what belongs to God. Acknowledge him to be the king of your hearts, and, for the time to come, oblige all the powers of your soul to bow down to him, and to pay him your “reasonable service.”—Rom. xii.

#### ON THE BLINDNESS OF WORLDLINGS WHO SEEK NOT GOD.\*

*Jan. 23.]*—WERE it possible for the heart of man to find happiness in created things, it would not be cause of surprise were he to make them the chief object of his desires. But man is not like other created beings. “*Est vir desideriorum.*”—Dan. ix. He is a man of desires and wants. Were he possessed of ample stores of every kind; and were he able to say to his soul: “My soul, take thy rest, thou hast much goods for many years” (Luke, xii.), he would still be a man of desires and wants. The beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, are contented and happy when their corporal wants are supplied. But man, surrounded with plenty of every kind, is still unhappy, still hankering after something, which he cannot describe, and which seems to elude his search. That *something* is God. The beasts were made for the earth, and in the enjoyments of the earth they find happiness. Man was made for God, and in the enjoyment of God alone can he find contentment and peace.

This is not a new discovery. Every worldling has learnt it. He has learnt it from the experience of others. He has

learnt it from his own experience. He has learnt it even in his early years, from the instructions which he received from the ministers of God. Is it not, therefore, astonishing that such a being, as a professed worldling, should exist? Is it not humiliating to human nature, that such multitudes should be found, so blind to their true interests, as to seek happiness in the world, where they know it is not to be found, and to refuse to seek it in God, who alone can satisfy their desires? Is not such blindness wilful? and is it not the height of folly? They know that “the justices of the Lord are right, rejoicing hearts: that the commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes: that the fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever: and that the judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves: more to be desired than gold and many precious stones, and sweeter than honey and the honey comb.”—Ps. xviii. And yet they will not taste and see! Oh! the *pride of life*! how degrading is it to our nature!

Examine yourselves, and be resolved to seek God in earnest. Content not yourselves with *knowing* that he is your friend, your father, and your God: but *look up* to him as such; and love and serve him as such. For, what will it profit you to believe as a Christian, and to live as a heathen?

WHY IS IT THAT WORLDLINGS DO NOT SEEK GOD?\*

*Jan. 24.*]—NEVER was there a good Christian that found as much pleasure in the joys of the world, as in the consolations of piety. How comes it, then, that the world has so many followers, and that the paths of piety are deserted? The reason is, because the greater number of men have never tasted the consolations of piety. Their ideas of pleasure go no farther than the joys which the world imparts. The pleasures arising from the accumulation of riches—the pleasures of agreeable society—the pleasures of public amusements

—the pleasures of the table—the pleasures of earthly love—the pleasures of sensual and carnal gratifications—the pleasures of honour and ambition—in a word, the pleasures of the senses, are the only pleasures they have experienced, and they have no idea of any enjoyment that is more exquisite.

They know not what it is to enjoy an intimate union with God, and to be absorbed in him. They know not what it is to converse familiarly with God, in their own interior. The saints have spent whole nights in prayer, and found the time too short. Worldlings have no conception of the nature of their enjoyment. The royal prophet says: “One day spent in thy house, O Lord, is better than a thousand spent in the tabernacles of sinners.”—Ps. lxxxii. Worldlings cannot comprehend this language.

Oh! were they once to conceive the nature of spiritual delights—were they once to “taste and see how sweet is the Lord” (Ps. xxxiii.), the enjoyments of the world would appear as nothing in their eyes. The pleasures of divine love are a foretaste of the joys of heaven: for, what are the joys of heaven, but joys arising from the sight and love of God? Oh! did but worldlings know what pure delights, what exquisite enjoyments, are within their reach, how eagerly would they turn away from these husks of swine, and run to their God! But no: man will not be wise.

Examine yourselves, and, if you have already tasted the sweets of the chalice of the Lord, drink deeper, and deeper. Your soul will never be cloyed. You will be inebriated with the torrent of delights flowing from the throne of God; and you will sigh only for that happy moment when you will be immersed in the ocean of his divinity for endless ages.

#### ON THE CONVERSION OF ST PAUL.\*

*Jan. 25.*]—St. Paul was raised by God to the highest dignity in the church, and was commissioned to perform the important

task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. But what was he, previous to this call from God? A fiery zealot, a violent persecutor of the faithful followers of Jesus.

Oh! how powerful is the grace of God! What changes has it not wrought in the minds of the most obdurate sinners! How comes it that it has produced so little effect in our hearts? We sin, and we repent: and yet we sin again. Can it be said that the grace of God has lost its power? or, that it is bestowed with a more sparing hand? Or, are we to acknowledge that the fault is on our side? Ah! we cannot say that there is any deficiency on the part of God.

Were we animated with the same spirit as was St. Paul, the grace of God would operate the same effects in us as it did in him. Although he was a fiery zealot, he was not an obstinate or relapsing sinner. Although he persecuted the church of Christ, he acted according to the dictates of his conscience. He was animated with zeal in a cause which he supposed to be the cause of God. He sinned through ignorance, not through pride or the depravity of corrupt nature. No sooner was his ignorance removed than he became a shining light in the church—the doctor of the Gentiles—and a perfect pattern of every virtue. We have not ignorance to plead in our behalf. We do not sin through zeal in a wrong cause. If the grace of God, therefore, does not produce in us the same effects as in St. Paul, it is owing entirely to our own defects.

But what lessons does the conversion of St. Paul present before us! What lessons of humility at the sight of our numberless wilful transgressions! What lessons of compassion for the failings of those multitudes who are daily sinning through ignorance! What inducements to submission when persecuted by the unwise! and what sentiments of charity for those who, by persecuting us, think that they are doing a work acceptable in the sight of God!

Examine what effect the grace of God works in your souls.

You will not be commissioned, like St. Paul, to convert nations. But you are commissioned to convert and sanctify your own souls, and to become a pattern of piety to others. Sufficient grace is offered to you for these purposes. Imitate, in these respects, the example of St. Paul; and suffer not the grace of God to become void in you.

GOD ALONE CAN SATISFY THE HEART OF MAN.\*

*Jan. 26.]*—“My God,” said St. Francis of Sales, “when I turn away from thee, I discover nothing that can give peace to my soul. In the friendship of man, I find nothing that can help me. In the power of man, I find nothing that can support me. In the wisdom of man, I find nothing that can direct me. In books, I find nothing that can give me consolation. In gold and silver, nothing that can alleviate my sufferings; in retirement, nothing that can give me confidence, or make me satisfied with myself. It is from thee alone, my God, that all my good must come: for thou alone art my comforter, my instructor, and my helper.”

With what truth may every Christian make this same declaration! Who has ever resisted or turned away from God, and has found peace? Can we point out any one who has enjoyed comfort in affliction—ease of mind in the midst of excruciating pains—tranquillity in adversity—joy in sufferings—calmness in the midst of injuries and affronts—or uninterrupted delight in the midst of worldly festivities, at the time when his heart was not centered in God? During these six thousand years, the world has studied how to give happiness to the mind of man, independently of God: and it has not made the discovery. In fact it was impossible: for, it is in God alone that the mind of man can find peace. Since, therefore, nothing that is in the world can satisfy the cravings of our soul, let us fly to our God. Let us fix our affections on him alone. Let us seek happiness in him alone.

In him all our wants will be satisfied; and he will be our reward exceeding great.

Examine yourselves, and be no longer deceived by vanity and lies. The world is not worthy of you. The Creator of the world demands your heart. Give it to him without delay. In him you will find everything that is good—happiness here, and happiness hereafter.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD IN STREWING THE WORLD WITH THORNS.\*

*Jan. 27.]*—"It is truly astonishing," says St. Augustine (*Serm.* 108), "that men should so ardently love the world, agitated and convulsed as it is. What would they do if it was in a state of perfect tranquillity and peace? Their affections are fixed on the world, although it is full of misery and affliction: what would it be if the world presented before them nothing but pleasure? They eagerly grasp the thorns of the world; what would they do if the world were covered with flowers?"

Ah! the goodness of God would not expose his beloved children to so much danger. He knew the difficulties which they would have to encounter, in taking off their affections from visible things, and fixing them on the things that are invisible: and he knew that those difficulties would be increased in proportion to the real pleasures which were to be found in this land of exile. Out of compassion, therefore, to their weakness, he has strewed the world with thorns. Virtue he has decorated with every charm, in order to allure them to its embraces. But in every cup of pleasure he has mixed bitterness, in order to wean their hearts from sensual things, and to withdraw them from the danger of being deluded by their deceitful appearances.

Oh! let us be grateful to that good God, who consults our true and real welfare in all his works. He has clothed the earth with beauty, for the purpose of raising up our hearts to

him, and as a pledge that he has more splendid glories in store for us in the world to come. And he has implanted thorns in the midst of these beauties, on purpose to convince us of the vanity of seeking happiness in them. Let us not, then, eagerly grasp them. They are only shadows of what is prepared for us. Let us seek after the substance.

Examine yourselves, and on all occasions, when contradictions and affronts assail you—when losses and disappointments come upon you—when pains and uneasinesses torment you—consider them as part of the thorns, which are scattered in all the ways of life, for the purpose of weaning your affections from earthly things, and fixing them on those better things which are prepared for you.

ON THE WEARISSNESS WHICH IS SOMETIMES EXPERIENCED BY  
THE VIRTUOUS IN THE WAYS OF PIETY.\*

*Jan. 28.*]—DURING our sojournment in the world, we shall never enjoy undisturbed tranquillity and peace. “The life of man is a warfare upon earth.”—Job. vii. We must always be in a state of conflict, and in a state of uncertainty. In this state, what is to be expected, but that weariness will attend constant exertion, and that irksomeness will sometimes be felt in the repetition of the same exercises? But are we to be discouraged by such sensations as these? Ought we not to know that human nature, by its own weakness, is liable to such trials? Ah! they who follow the world experience greater trials than these, and they are not discouraged by them. Shall it be said that we, animated by the spirit of God, are abashed, and discouraged, and dismayed by the little irksomeness, and weariness, and other trials, which are experienced in the ways of virtue?

Let us rather look forward to the crown that is set before us. “Not only think of the road, along which you are travelling,” says St. Augustine (*Conc. 2. in Ps. 36*), “but



take care never to lose sight of the blessed country towards which you are hastening. You meet here with transitory sufferings, but you will soon enjoy everlasting rest." In order to labour with constancy and cheerfulness, consider the reward. The labourer would faint in the vineyard, were he not cheered by the thought of what he was to receive. When you look up to the recompense, everything that you shall do or suffer will appear light, and as no more than a shadow, for your labours will bear no manner of proportion with what you are to receive for them. You will wonder that so much is to be given for such trifling exertions.

Examine yourselves, and be as ready to submit to the trials of piety for God's sake, as worldlings are to the trials of the world for profit's sake. You are labouring for happiness for all eternity; they, for the possession of mammon, which will shortly be taken from them.

ON THE INTERIOR INSPIRATIONS WHICH ARE GIVEN TO  
WORLDLINGS.\*

*Jan. 29.*]—WE see the great men of the world, and, to judge from outward appearance, it would seem that all was well with them. They have amusements of every kind at their command, and they freely indulge in them. The pleasures of society—the pleasures of the table—the pleasures of riches and dominion—the pleasure of self-will, are all within their reach. The world holds out to them everything that they think their hearts can desire. We see them in the midst of their pleasures, and we are tempted to conclude that they enjoy real pleasure and happiness.

But we see not what passes in their interior. Worldly pleasures and inward peace of mind never unite together. There is a monitor, in the secret recesses of their souls, which incessantly reproves them for their sensualities. There is a sting in the midst of their conscience, which tortures them

after every inordinate indulgence of flesh and blood. There is a voice whispering in their ear, declaring to them, that worldly joys will never satisfy their desires, and inviting them to joys of a purer nature—the sweets of innocence and divine love.

St. Aelred, Abbot of Rieval, in Yorkshire, was, in the early part of life, surrounded by the splendours of the world. He described the situation of his soul in these words: “Those who saw me, judging from the gaudy show which surrounded me, and not knowing what passed in the interior of my soul, said, speaking of me, ‘*Oh! how well it is with him! how happy is he!*’ But they knew not the anguish of my mind; for the deep wound in my heart gave me a thousand tortures, and I was not able to bear the intolerable stench of my sins.” But after he had renounced the vanities of the world, he said: “I began to know what immense pleasure is found in thy service, O God, and how sweet that peace is, which is its inseparable companion.”—*Butler’s SS. LL. Jan. 12.*

Examine yourselves, and let not the gaudy pageantry of the world deceive you. If they, who have everything at their command, cannot find happiness in the world, why should you expect to find it, who have so little of this world within your reach? No: run to your God, for in him alone will you find true peace.

ON THE INSTRUCTIVE LESSONS WHICH ARE GIVEN US BY THE  
CHILDREN OF THE WORLD.\*

*Jan. 30.]*—“AH!” said St. Syncretica, “how happy should we be, did we but take as much pains to gain heaven and please God, as worldlings do to heap up riches and perishable things? By land, they venture amongst thieves and robbers; at sea, they expose themselves to the fury of the winds and storms; they suffer shipwrecks and all perils—they attempt all—they try all, and hazard all. But we, in serving so great

a master, for so immense a good, are afraid of every contradiction.”—*Butler’s SS. Jan. 5.*

How frequently is this to be witnessed amongst Christians! Where do we find zeal? Where do we see labour? Where do we discover anxiety and solicitude? Where do we witness sorrow for losses, or extraordinary exertions for the obtaining some desirable object? Amongst the children of the world, the exertion of every faculty of the mind is discoverable in them.

Oh! why is there not found the like zeal, and labour, and anxiety, and solicitude amongst the children of God, for the obtaining of riches, which will never depart from them—for the obtaining of happiness, which will never have an end? Lst us take a lesson from the children of vanity. In this way the world may be profitable to us. We have substantial goods set within our reach. We have happiness—true and real happiness—placed before us. Let us profit by the examples of worldlings, and exert the same zeal and energy in obtaining possession of them, as they do in prosecuting their temporal well-being. Had we the sanctification of our souls as much at heart as they have the increase of their stores, how rapidly should we advance from virtue to virtue! and how soon should we attain to the summit of perfection!

Examine yourselves and reflect, that it will cost no more trouble, as a great saint has remarked, to save your souls, than it will to lose them. Why then should you be discouraged? Rouse the energies of your soul. Consult your only good, and everything will be easy and agreeable to you.

THE TRIUMPHS OF THE MARTYRS OUGHT TO EXCITE US TO  
LABOUR EARNESTLY FOR OUR SALVATION.\*

*Jan. 31.]*—“The wisdom of the philosophers,” says St. Ephrem (*Hom., de Sanc. Mart.*), “the eloquence of orators, have been put to silence by the extraordinary spectacles

exhibited in the glorious combats of the martyrs. Tyrannical judges have been struck with astonishment at the sight of the zeal, fervour, courage, and cheerfulness of these holy combatants. What plea shall we be able to bring forward before the tribunal of Christ, if, sheltered as we are from persecutions and tortures, we are negligent in the service of God, and careless about the great affair of salvation? What a contrast! On one side, the martyrs are inseparably united to their God, even in the midst of the severest trials. On the other side, the generality of Christians, in these times, although in the midst of peace, refuse him a heart, which, by every title, is his due. How shall we come off on that awful day, when our eternal lot is to be decided? When the martyrs, with a holy confidence, shall show the marks of their glorious wounds, what shall we be able to present before our judge? Shall we be able to bring forward in our favour a lively faith—a sincere charity—a detachment of affection from earthly things—victories obtained over our passions, a love of silence and recollection—hearts meek and humble—treasures deposited in the bosoms of the poor—prayers, watchings, and tears of repentance? Happy the man, who shall be accompanied to the tribunal of God by such works as these. He may appear with confidence before Christ and his angels.

Holy martyrs! whose sufferings have entitled you to an immortal crown, vouchsafe to interest yourselves in our favour. We are wretched sinners. But, aided by your prayers, we may hope that the grace of God will enlighten our hearts, and inflame our souls with the holy fire of divine love.

Examine whether you have hitherto been deficient in the cause of your souls. Let the examples of the martyrs excite you to a renewed diligence. Endeavour to be perfect in every good work, and desist not, until you have reason to exclaim with the apostle: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course."—2 Tim. iv.

## ON PREPARING FOR PERSECUTION AND MARTYRDOM.\*

*Feb. 1.]*—WE now enjoy the blessings of peace. We are allowed the free exercise of our religion, without the fear of racks and gibbets. What use do we make of this liberty? Are we to conclude that the enemy is chained down, and that liberty will never more be given to him to afflict the church? Ought we to let go the helm of the vessel, and sleep on the oars, in expectation that the calm will never more be disturbed by storms and tempests?

Now is the time to refit the vessel. Now is the time to recruit our forces. Now is the time to prepare for future conflicts. We are never in greater danger than when we seem to stand on the firmest ground. Let us, then, make use of this calm, this time of liberty, to perfect ourselves in the practice of every Christian virtue. Let us endeavour to prepare ourselves for the severest trials, by exciting in our minds a sincere love of God, and a preference of him and of his holy laws before all created things.

It is very possible that a storm may be near at hand. The enemy may, perhaps, even now, be asking power to afflict this our little church: and power may be granted to him. The sword of persecution has been unsheathed even in our times; and in a kingdom, where, according to human probability, it was much less to be expected than it is here. Peaceable as we are now, in a short time we may be called to give an account of our faith, and no alternative may be left to us but a base apostacy, or a violent death.

Oh! let us take advantage of the present moment, and, by a life of superior holiness, let us prepare our souls for the conflict. If it shall please God to allow us to sink peaceably into the grave, this preparation will yet be profitable to us: it will fit our souls for the awful trial which awaits us, as soon as our mortal course shall be terminated.

Examine yourselves, and reflect how vain, how useless are

all expectations from the world. The world is leagued with the devil. Both the one and the other are labouring for your destruction. Turn to your God. Take part with him by a life of piety and love. Then, if persecution should rage, you would joyfully consent to sacrifice your life for the love of him, who sacrificed his life for the love of you.

#### PURIFICATION OF OUR LADY.

*Feb. 2.]*—THE Virgin Mary is Mother of God; and yet, behold, in the ceremony of this day, she is willing to pass for the mother of an ordinary man. O profound humility! Do we imitate her, when our hearts are full of pride, and all our actions are influenced by it?

The Virgin Mary, although as pure as the sun, yet enters the temple to be purified more. O angelical chastity! do we practise this *heavenly virtue*, when we lie under the guilt of multiplied impurities, and in thought, word, and deed, offend against it? The Virgin Mary is not subject to the law, because she always remains a pure Virgin; and yet, behold, how cheerfully she submits to it. *O unparalleled obedience!* Are we obedient to the laws of God and the church, when we make no scruple of committing sin, by neglect of prayer and the sacraments, and by refusing to observe the duties of the days of obligation?

O Virgin Lady! succour us sinners, weeping and lamenting in this vale of tears: cast down thy motherly eyes upon us: obtain for us an humble heart, a chaste soul, and an obedient spirit. We know that it is our duty to endeavour to copy your virtues, if we hope to obtain the favour of your intercession.

The Blessed Virgin, with the infant Jesus in her arms, being come into the temple, immediately consecrates him to his eternal Father, delivering him into the hands of the venerable Simeon, who had a promise of seeing the Saviour

of the world before he died. God has, for a long time, called on us to give him our hearts; and shall we refuse him so mean an offering? O Lord, my heart is in thy hands, dispose of it as thou pleasest.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved to imitate the virtues and offerings which your Lady recommends to you in the festival of this day. She offered to God her most tender treasure: do you offer up your hearts. She offered up her son: do you offer up your children; but let it be by the hands of Mary. Nothing will be refused to her intercession.

*When Septuagesima falls after the 3rd of February, the Reflections that are wanting for the intermediate days between the Purification and Septuagesima, are to be taken from the 15th and following days of June.*

## SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.\*

### ON PREPARATION FOR LENT.

THE annual fast of Lent is approaching, and on this day, the church calls on her children to prepare themselves for it. Oh! let us attend to this call. But what preparation are we to make? Many will say to themselves, "the time of enjoyment is short, I will make merry and enjoy myself, before the penitential season commences." This is not the preparation which a Christian is called upon to make. We have already indulged in sensual pleasures beyond what is expedient for sinners; and would it be showing forth a penitential spirit, were we to prepare for self-denial by eagerness for pleasure? Would this be testifying a desire to make reparation for the past? Or would it be giving a pledge, that we should fast willingly and profitably during the course of Lent? Alas! it would prove too manifestly, that our mortifications, during the approaching season, would be against our will. It would give reason to fear, that we should run as at an uncertainty; that we should

fight as men beating the air; that we should not chastise our bodies so as to bring them into subjection; and that we should not escape the danger of becoming cast-aways in the sight of God.

Our preparation, therefore, must consist in retrenching usual indulgences. The church acts, in this respect, like a tender mother and a skilful physician. She foresees the danger which may arise from an abrupt change of food and habit of living; and, for that reason, among others, she admonishes us to prepare for this change, by degrees, during this intermediate time.

Let us, therefore, retrench a little from our appetite, every day. Let us begin to mortify our will. Let us begin to deny ourselves in lawful things. Let us reject every indulgence which is superfluous—then, when the time of fasting is come, we shall be prepared for it, and we shall be in dispositions to “crucify the flesh with its vices and concupiscences.”—Gal. v.

Examine yourselves, and see what are your dispositions at this time. The time of preparation for Lent is short. If you spend this time in dissipation and pleasure, how will you be prepared for the rigours of fasting? And if you are not able to endure fasting, through want of preparation, to whom will the fault be attributed?

## MONDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA.

### ON DOING PENANCE FOR OUR SINS.\*

SINNERS must do penance for their sins. “Except you do penance, you shall all perish.”—Luke xiii. Infants, who have been baptized, are saved on account of their innocence. But we who have come to the use of reason, “have all sinned, and all need the glory of God.”—Rom. iii. Penance is the only plank on which we can be saved, after the general shipwreck.

Our Lord did not suffer for the purpose of saving sinners from the sorrows of repentance. He suffered, leaving them





an example, that they should walk in his footsteps.”—1 Pet. ii. He suffered, in order to induce them to inflict voluntary sufferings on themselves. He suffered, in order that, through his sufferings, a value may be stampt on the penitential austerities which they may endure in the spirit of penance.

Let us, then, begin to think seriously during this preparatory time. Sin must be punished, either here or hereafter. Voluntary penance must be endured in this life, or we must undergo the severity of God’s judgments in the next. Oh! with this certainty before our eyes, how can we continue to run on in the paths of worldly festivity and mirth? How can we flatter ourselves that we are in earnest in the great business of working out our salvation, when we dread the *evil day*, as we call it, and put off the works of self-denial, until the time comes, when the positive command of the church imposes them? Is this the way to crucify the flesh? Is it not rather following the ways of the flesh? Is it not screening the rebellious victim as far as in us lies? and then only delivering him up to justice, when justice can be no longer deferred? Oh! let us not listen to the suggestions of this domestic enemy. He has already deceived us into the ways of sin. Let him not again deceive us, by withdrawing us from the paths of repentance.

Examine yourselves, and see whether it be your sincere desire to turn effectually from sin to God. If it be, you will feel an eagerness to enter on a course of penance; and you will not fail to prepare yourselves for it in the way which is calculated to insure success to your undertaking

## TUESDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA.

ON DOING PENANCE FOR OUR SINS.—CONTINUED.

WE frequently have recourse to the sacrament of reconciliation: but are we thereby freed from the obligation of performing the painful works of penance? Is everything done that is

required of us, as soon as we have received that holy sacrament? Ah! the inspired and royal prophet thought otherwise. Although a messenger was commissioned by God himself to declare to him that his "sin was forgiven," (2 Kings, xii.), he applied himself attentively to works of penance. Before he was made sensible of his sin, he ran on thoughtlessly in the ways of jollity and mirth. But, when his eyes were opened to behold the enormity of his offence, he renounced the vanities of mirth and pleasure. He did penance in sackcloth and ashes. Although he knew that his sin was remitted, he declared that his "sin was always before him;" that "every night he watered his couch with his tears;" that he "laboured in his groans;" that he "mingled ashes with his bread, and tears with his drink;" and that his constant prayer to the Lord was, that he would "not cast him away from his holy face, nor take his holy Spirit from him."—Psalms, *passim*.

We, probably, have committed more numerous, and, perhaps, more enormous sins than were committed by David. No express commission from heaven has been sent to us, to assure us that these sins are forgiven, although we have received the sacrament of penance. There may have been deficiencies on our part: and, in this state of uncertainty, we may truly say, that we know not whether we are worthy of love or hatred. And can we call ourselves penitents, if we still court the scenes of festivity and mirth? Alas! our sins ought always to be before our eyes. We ought to water our couch with our tears, and to labour in our groans. We ought to be instant in prayer, and to esteem ourselves happy if, after all our exertions, the Lord shall be pleased to cast a merciful eye upon us.

Examine yourselves, and see what reasons you have to hope that the Lord has forgiven you your sins. If your reasons are well founded, rejoice. But yet, continue to repent. The obligation of self-denial and penance will never be taken from you.

## WEDNESDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA.

## ON THE MANNER OF DOING PENANCE.\*

How little do worldlings understand the manner in which they ought to do penance. Accustomed as they are to seek ease and comfort, they wish to find the same even in works of self-denial and penance. If they feel pain from fasting, they conceive that they have sufficient cause for a dispensation. If they find that a strict adherence to the rules of Lent renders them incapable of enjoying their usual pleasures, or debilitates their powers of attending to business, they rank themselves immediately in the number of those who cannot fast.

Alas! how different is this from the Christian spirit of piety and repentance! Our flesh has been rebellious; and our spirit, which ought to have kept the flesh in subjection, has joined in the rebellion. Is it, therefore, consistent with the spirit of repentance, to listen again to the suggestions of the flesh, and to perform those works only which are not painful to it, or which do not clash with our temporal interests? Our divine Redeemer had joy set before him, and he preferred the cross. He did not shrink from pain. He carried his cross, cheerfully and willingly. To suffer, was the object for which he came into the world: and he embraced sufferings as his voluntary portion.

We ought to consider ourselves as just victims to pain on account of our sins. The house of mourning, and not the house of mirth, ought to be the place of our abode, particularly during this time. Repentance is necessarily painful to flesh and blood: and, because it is painful to flesh and blood, it will be profitable to us. To do penance, is to suffer; and to suffer with Christian patience is the way to promote the sanctification of our soul, to crucify the flesh with its vices and concupiscences, and to make atonement for past sins.

Examine whether or not you are disposed to do penance in

this manner. You *must* do penance, or you will perish everlastingly. Oh! take courage, and be resolved to prefer the salvation of your souls before the gratification of your bodies.

## THURSDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA.

ON THE MANNER OF DOING PENANCE.—CONTINUED.\*

THE penance of a truly repenting sinner does not consist merely in fasting from his usual food. This is only a part, and a part of little importance, when it is not accompanied with the other requisites. The repenting sinner is careful to mortify his will, even in things that are indifferent. He watches over his temper, and represses every rising emotion to anger or impatience. He seeks to be meek and humble in the presence of others, and does not hesitate to sacrifice his will and inclinations to the will of others, when conscience does not interfere. He bears injuries with patience, remembering what his Saviour suffered on account of the sins of men. He submits to the labours and hardships of his state of life with a penitential spirit, and endeavours to sanctify each action by offering it up to God, and performing it for his honour and glory. Privations, losses, disappointments, and contradictions, he considers as his due, on account of his sins; and he endures them cheerfully. He renounces the society of those false friends, whose example is calculated to lead him into sin: and he flies with abhorrence, from those places of amusement, where his innocence has already suffered shipwreck. His only pain arises from the recollection of his past failings. These he constantly bewails. Frequently in the day, he throws himself at the feet of Christ; and, in the words of David, exclaims: "To thee only have I sinned, O Lord, and have done evil before thee. Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my iniquity."—Ps. l.

In this manner the true penitent does penance for his sins. This is the penitential spirit which we all ought to seek. Let us seek after it; and, when found, let us persevere to the end in the pious exercises which it will suggest: and it will not fail to bring us to the possession of the reward which is promised to true penitents.

Examine how far you have hitherto been animated with this spirit. If the spirit of self-love have too great influence over you, renounce it without delay. Your time, perhaps, is short. Do now what you will wish to have done, when time shall be no more for you.

## FRIDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA.

### ON THE PENITENTIAL CANONS.\*

IN the primitive ages of the church, sinners submitted cheerfully to long and severe penances. No sooner had they fallen from the grace of baptism, than they threw themselves at the feet of their bishop, and entreated to be admitted to that course of penance which the nature of their sins required.

The works of penance, at that time, were not arbitrary. They were all prescribed by the laws of the church, according to the quality of the crime, and were called the *penitential canons*. To be clothed in sackcloth and ashes—to be secluded from the church during the holy sacrifice, and to lay prostrate in the porch, begging the prayers of the faithful who were entering in—to fast on bread and water, and to continue this severe course for months or years, according to the enormity of the sin, was the regular penalty imposed for grievous transgressions, before absolution was given. And yet, these fervent—these repentant sinners, submitted to it with joy.

Oh! how difficult would it be, in these times, to induce

sinner to submit to penances of this kind! How grating to the pride of dress would it be to be clothed, before the eyes of the public, in sackcloth and ashes!—how painful to the pride of self-love to lie prostrate before others, and humbly solicit their prayers—how humiliating to that love of superiority, which induces us to seek the first places in the synagogues, to be obliged to lie prostrate in the porch of the temple!—how painful to the sensual appetite, to renounce for months or years all other food but bread and water! And yet, in those times, even emperors submitted to those humiliations and restraints after they had publicly sinned. Oh! how different was the spirit of piety, and the fervour of repentance, in former ages, from what is to be witnessed amongst Christians in these times! What powerful reasons have we to be ashamed of our tepidity? What urgent motives to strive to attain to a newness of life!

Examine yourselves, and see what are your dispositions in regard to works of penance. These severe *penitential canons* are not now in force. But are you disposed to do *private* penance as far as the justice of God requires?

## SATURDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA.

ON THE SACRAMENTAL WORKS OF PENANCE IMPOSED IN  
THESE LATTER AGES.\*

THE severity of our holy mother, the church, is not the same in these times, as it was in former ages. She no longer imposes on her repenting children the public and protracted penances which she formerly imposed. But why this change? Was she less affectionate—less tender of her children then than she is now? Not at all. Her severity at that time was caused by her love for her children, and her indulgence at this time is owing to no other cause. Why then this difference of treatment? Because prudence and discretion required it of

her. In the primitive ages, her children were fervent, and animated with the purest love of God. The enormity of sin made a due impression on their minds, and they were convinced that too much penance could not be done for it. She, therefore, imposed penances in some degree commensurate with the offence, knowing that they would be cheerfully fulfilled. In these times her children are comparatively tepid, and strangers to the spirit of true piety. They sin, and the enormity of their offence is not duly considered by them. She accommodates herself, accordingly, to the weaknesses of her children, and allows that such penances only should be imposed which may be performed privately, and which will not interfere with their usual employments.

But if the church is more indulgent to the weaknesses of her children, can it be said that the Almighty is more indulgent? Is sin less hateful in his sight now than it was then? Does he require less penance now than he did then? Is mercy to be extended more readily to his rebellious servants of these times, than it was to his frail, but fervent children of the primitive ages? No: the justice of God is the same now as ever it was. And if a few prayers only, or a few private acts of mortification only, are now imposed on sinners in the sacrament of penance, they are not thereby exempted from the severities of penance in private. The *penitential canons* are not now in force. But to bring forth worthy fruits of penance, either in public or in private, is as much required of us as it was of the primitive Christians.

Examine yourselves, and be careful henceforward to proportionate your penance to the enormity of your offences. Do not think that the penance imposed in confession is all that is required of you. The perfection of the sacrament, indeed, requires no more. But the justice of God must be satisfied; and if it is not satisfied in this world, the satisfaction required will be dreadful in the next.

## SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.\*

WE read in the epistle of this Sunday, a description of the great sufferings—the great labours, which St. Paul endured in the cause of Christ. This lesson is appointed by the church to be read on this day, for the purpose of encouraging us to prepare for the comparatively trifling conflicts which we shall have to sustain against flesh and blood during the approaching season. What was there that this apostle did not endure? And what was there that he was not ready to endure? Ah! the love of God was superior in his mind to everything beside. He “counted all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ.....and counted them but as dung that he might gain Christ.”—Phil. iii. “Christ, and him crucified,” was the only object of his ambition.—1 Cor. ii.

Are we animated with the same sentiments? Are we ready to submit to the like labours, privations, and sufferings, for the name of Jesus? Alas! we are discouraged by the very appearance of difficulty or labour: and we foolishly imagine that we escape an evil, when we escape the things that are painful to flesh and blood. But how short-sighted is human prudence! Sufferings endured with Christian patience, and for the love of God, are rendered sweet and pleasing by the smiles of heaven. St. Paul, in the midst of all his sufferings, was favoured from above with the most extraordinary consolations. He was wrapt up in spirit even to the third heaven, and saw and heard things which it is impossible for man on earth to see and hear. He describes his ecstasies in such lively terms, and with such transports of delight, as to prove that, even in this life, he experienced the truth of these his words: “The sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.”—Rom. viii.

Oh! why will we not seek consolation where it is to be



found! Were we to chastise our bodies, like St. Paul, and were we to be animated with the same spirit of the love of God, then spiritual consolations would flow in upon our souls, and torrents of delight would extinguish in us all relish, or, at least, all inordinate desires of the enjoyments which this world can impart.

Examine yourselves, and see what kind of consolations you are most eager to enjoy. The consolations of piety are real and permanent. Seek them, like St. Paul, and you will obtain them. The consolations of the flesh are not worthy of your ambition.

## MONDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA.

### ON THE GRIEVOUSNESS OF MORTAL SIN.

SIN is an offence against God; and, therefore, it is, in a manner, infinite, because God is infinite. God only knows the malice of sin; and none but devils, or those animated by the influence of those impure spirits, can commit it knowingly. If an affront, given by a subject to his sovereign, be deemed worthy of punishment, what can we think of the malice of sin? What can we think of the crime committed by that pitiful insect, begot in sin—that wretched worm, whose crawling upon its fellow dust is more than it deserves—when it flies in the face of infinite majesty? No wonder that sin is so enormous as to require the blood of an incarnate God to cancel it.

God created us to be happy with him. He redeemed us with the price of his most precious blood. He has called us to the true faith. Moreover, he sanctifies our souls with his heavenly graces: he gives us the bread we eat, the air we breathe, the life we spend: and can we ungratefully prefer, before him, the unreasonable satisfaction of a *base passion*? Can we be so unnatural as to convert his blessings into arms

against him; to make our senses the instruments of sin; and to defile these bodies, which he has so often sanctified with the most blessed sacrament? Ah! let us never more be guilty of so black an ingratitude.

Find out a place where God cannot see you, and you shall have leave to sin. But where will that be? If you ascend up into heaven, *he is there*: if you descend into hell, *he is there*: if you take wing, and fly to the remotest corners of the earth, *he is there*. Your most secret thoughts, as well as your daily actions, are all laid open to his adorable eyes: and dare you offend him in his almighty presence?

Examine yourselves, and be resolved henceforward to detest sin, above all other evils. It was sin that caused Jesus to sweat blood in the garden. It was sin that caused Jesus to bleed at the pillar, and on the cross. Be always on the watch; and, whenever you are tempted to sin, say: *what! shall I trample on the blood of Christ?*

## TUESDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA.

### ON THE HATRED GOD BEARS TO SIN.

THE most desperate hatred that men can bear to each other, in this world, or the implacable hatred of devils and damned souls towards God, cannot equal that utter aversion which God has for sin. He loves himself with an infinite love: his hatred of sin, therefore, must be infinite, since nothing is so opposite to his infinite goodness. No wonder, then, that "the sinner and sin are hateful to God."—Wisd. xiv. Ah! how wretched a state it is, to be eternally hated by a most indulgent Father!

God banished the rebel angels from the joys of heaven, and cast them forth into eternal darkness. He turned our first parents out of paradise; and entailed a curse upon them and their posterity. In every age he has showered down upon the

world ten thousand evils, and will continue so to do till the end of time. He buried the world in the waters of the deluge; and he daily condemns to hell innumerable souls. And why all this? Entirely on account of sin. For one only sin, a sin of thought, and indulged only for a moment, legions of bright angels lost their right to heaven. What, then, can we think, who have committed not only one, but many crying sins; not in thought only, but in word and deed? "Woe to us, because we have sinned!"—Lam. v.

God is a most tender Father: man is his child. God has loved him from the very beginning of the world. He has done for him all that his wisdom could invent, or his omnipotence effect. Nevertheless, although he loves man to this degree, for one mortal sin, unrepented of, he condemns him for ever to the flames of hell. Christians, can we live in sin, and in habitual sin, too, without fear and trembling? "O Lord, if thou hadst not borne with me, my soul, ere this, had dwelt in hell."—Ps. xxxix.

Examine yourselves, and be very careful to avoid sin, which thus provokes the anger of God. Let not his goodness, in bearing with you, be the unhappy motive of sinning more freely. Let not a day pass without examining your conscience, that thereby you may discover the most predominant failings of your life, and may root them out by sincere repentance.

## WEDNESDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA.

### ON THE EFFECTS OF SIN IN THE SOUL.

GRACE is so precious a jewel that none but God can give it: none but God knows its worth: none but God could merit it: and that was to be at the price of his blood. Grace is the fountain of all blessings: it makes us the children of God—it gives us an undisputed right to the possession of him. All this the soul loses by a mortal sin.

Every soul in the state of grace partakes of the sacraments and prayers of the church. She is illuminated with the fire of the Holy Ghost. She participates in the merits of the saints and martyrs, and in the superabounding merits of Jesus Christ. And, yet, the fruit of all this is lost by one mortal sin. Let her have a faith strong enough to remove mountains; let her heart be so generous as to give her substance to the poor; let her deliver up her body to the scorching flames; “without charity it will avail her nothing.”—1 Cor. xiii. She is dead to God; she is a slave to the devil, and liable to his torments. Oh! what does a soul lose by a mortal sin! And are we not sensible of it? Can we be at ease after so great a loss?

Open your eyes, miserable souls: see what you *were*, and what you *are*. You were, at baptism, the spouses of the most high God: by sin, you are become the adulterers of Satan. You were the temples of the Holy Ghost: but, alas! you are turned into a den of thieves. You were sisters to the angels: but you are become the companions of devils. Bewail, therefore, your condition, unhappy souls! bewail and weep, for the heavens weep for you.

Examine yourselves, and see whether, in the practice of your lives, you fly from sin, and all the immediate occasions thereof. Keep a guard upon your senses, that death may not enter through those avenues. Let your lamp be filled with the oil of charity and good works, that you may be found worthy to be admitted to the nuptials of the Lamb.

## THURSDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA.

### ON VENIAL SIN.

No virtuous person becomes wicked on a sudden. The light of faith, nature, and reason imprints on the soul a fear of mortal sin: but, by some customary neglect, or too fond a

familiarity with smaller sins, this fear wears off, we stare them boldly in the face, and, at length, commit them, without scruple or remorse.

It is true, that venial sin does not destroy charity: but it weakens and cools the fervour of the soul. It does not make an open breach betwixt God and man: but it hinders the inspirations of the Holy Ghost from working; prayer becomes tedious, good works troublesome; and the devil, perceiving that we lay aside our arms, makes the more vigorous and effectual efforts against us. True it is, that "he who contemns small faults will fall into great ones."—Ecc. xix. A small distemper, if at first neglected, becomes incurable: venial sin, if suffered to grow into a habit, exceedingly endangers the poor soul.

How great is the aversion which God bears to venial sin! He shuts the gates of heaven against it: he punishes it with the severe flames of purgatory; and oftentimes, with permitting the perpetrators of it to fall into mortal sin. And how should it be otherwise, when we reflect that our best homages redound not so much to his divine glory, as one, though only venial sin, does to his dishonour. Christians! let us not slight them. Let us not wilfully entertain distractions in our prayers: let us not bear resentment, nor fall into a passion at trifles. Let us not exceed the truth in discourse, nor by way of excuse. Let us not speak of our neighbour's failings, nor with pleasure listen to them.

Examine yourselves, and shun all venial sin as much as possible. Those of *oversight*, or *surprise*, may be excusable: but such as are of *custom*, or *wilful neglect*, are not so. We are unwilling to displease our friends, even in little matters. And shall we make no scruple of displeasing God? Did we truly love him, we should act far otherwise.

## FRIDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA.

## ON THE OCCASIONS OF SIN.

WERE we to see a person offering to walk on the slippery brink of a frightful precipice; or did we see a mariner putting to sea amidst rocks and shelves in a threatening storm, we should conclude them to be in almost certain danger of being lost. And is not the person, who puts himself into the occasions of sin, in as desperate a condition as to the concerns of his soul, when it is considered that, while the devil vigorously besieges him *without*, his passions are heated *within*, and ready to burst into a flame? The devil, at any time, is strong enough for us. The implacable hatred that he bears us, his wily artifices, and our own weaknesses, render our condition so very dangerous, that truly we have not the least reason to afford him arms for our fatal overthrow.

God has promised us his assistance in time of temptation; but he will not give it to those who presume to tempt him. And do we not tempt him, when we throw our weak selves into the very jaws of a devouring enemy, and nevertheless expect to be rescued by him? St. Peter relied too much on his own strength. He rashly threw himself into the immediate occasions of denying his master: and what was the result of it? He flatly denied his Lord, and confirmed his denial with an oath. Let the fall of this apostle be a warning to us. We have not, perhaps, half his strength; and dare we expose ourselves to as great dangers?

The saints “worked out their salvation with fear and trembling.”—Phil. ii. They never thought themselves secure in this world, although they utterly renounced whatever might afford the least occasion to sin. And can we, sinners, go on unconcerned? Can we think that the grace of God is at our command; and that, when we look our enemies in the face, and bid them fight us, we shall be sure to conquer? No: this would be the greatest presumption. Remember, “God resists the proud, and gives his grace to the humble.”—1 Pet. v.

Examine yourselves, and carefully avoid all occasions of sin; for, "he that loves danger shall perish in it."—Eccl. iii. Fly from evil company. Shun dangerous curiosity. Keep a guard on your senses. Dally not with temptation. Take the example of chaste Joseph for your pattern: "his best weapon," says St. Ambrose, "was his flight."

## SATURDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA.

### ON THE HUMBLE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF OUR FAULTS.\*

FREQUENT as is the guilt incurred by every one of us in venial points, how unwilling are we to plead guilty to any particular failing? We are ready to confess, in general terms, that we are sinners: but we object to particularise our offences. This originates in pride.

An eminent saint (Ephrem, deacon of Eddessa) made the following acknowledgment of his weaknesses; and shall we, who are strangers to the sanctity of which he was so admirable a pattern, refuse to make the same acknowledgment? "Ah Lord," said he, "I experience in myself the violence of the storms of pride, of self-love, sensuality, sloth, tepidity, impatience, and anger. When I am not flattered, I am uneasy and dissatisfied. When my brethren suffer pain, I am indifferent to their sufferings. When I am in pain myself, I never think that sufficient attention is paid to me. When I speak to my superiors, I pay them a certain respect. In their absence, I speak slightly of them, and refuse to obey their commands. How many thoughts come into my mind against the law, the apostles, the gospel, and the ministers of the inspired word! Who shall reckon up the frivolous subjects which occupy my mind when I am at prayer! or the defamations and scandals which I utter against my neighbour! To the most trifling conversation I listen with pleasure. But, when the subject of mortification and penance is introduced,

I am wearied and disgusted. I am a fond lover of my own ease; I am slothful in prayer; and ready to embrace every plea for dissipation and pleasure. I am unfeeling to the wants of others. I have an eye to my own interest in all my transactions with friends. I am constantly looking for presents. I am imprudent in interfering in the concerns of others, and sharing their faults. I am ingenious in forming useless plans. I am always ready to enter into argument, and always obstinate in maintaining my own opinion. This is my life. These are my actions." (*St. Ephrem, Confessions.*) This was the acknowledgment of an eminent saint. If humility caused him to see imaginary failings in himself, shall we be so blind as not to see the real failings of which we are guilty? Or, shall we be so proud, as not to acknowledge our failings, when they are seen and acknowledged by all around us?

Examine yourselves, and henceforward freely acknowledge your numberless imperfections. Daily, and hourly, repent of all your known sins, and with respect to those which are concealed from your eyes, cry out, with the royal prophet: "From my hidden sins cleanse me, O Lord."—Ps. xviii.

### QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.\*

"If I speak with the tongues of men and angels," says St. Paul, "or should I know all mysteries, or should I distribute all my goods to feed the poor, or should I deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it would profit me nothing"—1 Cor. xiii. These are deeds of Christian heroism, which are not of frequent occurrence in these times. But, if the performance even of such works as these will profit nothing without *charity*, what benefit are we to expect from the slight course of penance which we are about to commence, if this amiable virtue be wanting? Oh! true it is, that charity is indispensably necessary before anything, that we can do, will be acceptable in the sight of God.



But what is charity? St. Paul does not give the definition of this virtue. He describes its effects, and from them we are to learn the nature of the cause. *Charity is patient* under afflictions, and *kind*, or even-tempered, under provocations. *Charity envieth not* the good of others, *nor dealeth perversely*; neither is it *puffed up* with vain conceits of its own worth. *Charity is not ambitious* or high-minded, neither doth it *seek its own*, so as to neglect the benefit or well-being of others. *It is not provoked to anger*, *nor does it think evil* of others when it is possible to vindicate their innocence, or extenuate their guilt. *Charity rejoiceth not in the iniquity* of others, but *rejoiceth* sincerely when others follow the ways of virtue, which are the ways of truth. *Charity beareth* patiently the failings of others; *believeth all things* that are favourable to their character; *hopeth all things* that will contribute to their happiness, and *endureth* in silence their evil ways and depraved dispositions. *Charity*, in a word, *never falleth away*—never is diminished, but continues unabated during the whole course of life.

These are the effects of *charity*. And from what other course can they proceed but the pure love of God? Oh! truly, the love of God is the perfection of every virtue. “He that loves not, remains in death.”—1 John, iii. Let us seek to acquire this amiable virtue. Its effects will soon manifest themselves, and our fasting, trifling as it may be, will be available to the salvation of our souls.

Examine whether you perceive in your souls all these effects of charity. Be not satisfied with only a part of them. Unite them all together in the practice of your lives, and you will, undoubtedly, be entitled to the rewards of charity.

## SHROVE MONDAY.

## ON MEDITATION.

THERE is no going to heaven without the practice of virtue; and there is no practising virtue without the knowledge of it, which is not to be had but by the help of *meditation*. Christians, let us not neglect this great means of salvation; let us not, for shame, think that half an hour a-day is too much to be employed in the concern of eternity.

We have faith, it is true, yet so very imperfect it is, that we may venture to affirm that to the weakness of faith is to be attributed the weakness of the greatest number of Christians.

Now, what can more efficaciously enliven our declining faith than pious meditation? We suffer very much through the corruption of our hearts, the feebleness of our will, the darkness of our understanding, and the force of our passions and wicked habits. We are, moreover, in the midst of enemies the most crafty, the most powerful, and the most malicious. Now, what more efficacious means of defeating them can there be than observing their motions, discovering their artifices, recruiting our own strength, and flying their attempts? And is not this the business of meditation?

“O Lord, as a swallow, I will cry to thee; I will meditate as a dove.”—Isa. xxxviii. I see that meditation is the only way left of increasing my faith, of strengthening my hope, of inflaming my love, of vanquishing my enemies, and of saving my soul. O! pardon me for having hitherto neglected this duty! I am truly sensible that my coldness in devotion, my daily failings, the neglect of my duties, the little amendment of my life, are to be attributed to this neglect.

Examine yourselves, and let no pretence take you off from the duty of daily meditation. Let no worldly concerns be a hindrance, since none of them are so important to you as the concerns of eternity. The merchant can think of the

necessary means to secure his effects, and the lawyer his cause, and why not we to save our souls? It is in meditating only that heavenly conferences pass between the soul and God.

## SHROVE TUESDAY.

### ON THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION.

MEDITATION is the life of prayer. Prayer is cold—it is dead without it. To put in due practice this great help to salvation, it is necessary that, first, we place ourselves in the presence of God, and beseech him to inspire us with his grace, without which we cannot meditate well, nor move a step towards heaven.

Next, we are to fix our serious thoughts on some pious subject, which *this*, or *any other* pious book of meditations may supply us with, such as the perfections of God, and his goodness to us—our own wretchedness and ingratitude to him—death, judgment, hell, and heaven—the grievousness of sin, and of our own sins in particular—the Christian virtues—the examples of the saints, and of Jesus Christ, the saint of saints. To increase our fervour in meditation, it would be proper, sometimes, to imagine ourselves as beggars before the throne of God asking for alms—sometimes, as if we were on our death-bed, given over by the physician—sometimes, as if we were arraigned at the bar of divine justice—at other times, as if we were on the brink of the infernal precipice—sometimes, as if we were conversing with the saints in heaven—and oftentimes, as if we were conversing with Jesus in the manger, or on the cross.

This done, we are to endeavour to raise our affections by some pious ejaculations. “Lord, it is I who have sinned: it is I who have done evil.”—1 Chron. xxi. “O Lord, how marvellous is thy name.”—Ps. viii. “I acknowledge my

iniquity, and my sin is always before me. Create in me a clean heart, O God.”—Ps. l. “How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts.”—Ps. lxxxviii. “The Lord is my salvation, whom shall I fear.”—Ps. xxvi. “I am a worm, and no man, the contempt of men and the outcast of the people.”—Ps. xxi. “Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.”—John xxi. “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory.”—Ps. cxlii. These affections are to be followed with good resolutions; and the whole to be concluded with thanksgiving and prayer.

Examine yourselves, and let not a day pass without devoting a quarter, or half an hour, to meditation. The morning is the most proper time for it. Seriously consider the subject you are to meditate upon; and endeavour to imitate the prudent gardener who never leaves his plants till he has thoroughly watered them.

#### ON ST. MATTHIAS.

*Feb. 24.*—THE brethren being assembled at Jerusalem, to the number, nearly, of one hundred and twenty, in order to choose an apostle, to supply the place of the traitor, Judas, they proposed two, Joseph, surnamed the Just, and Matthias; and the lot fell upon Matthias, who was associated to the eleven.—Acts i. Great saint! how does your election comfort our hearts! Millions of angels have forfeited their happiness; their places in heaven must all be filled up; and may we not be of the happy number decreed to fill them? Have we not reason to believe so, when such singular marks of mercy have accompanied us from our cradle? But, when we reflect that Judas fell, although so favoured by Christ, and an apostle too, what great reason have we to tremble?

The proud angels fell from heaven, and they are to be succeeded by saints. Saul lost his crown, and David found it. Judas lost his place amongst the apostles, and St. Matthias

filled it. Merciful Lord! what will our lot be? Shall we persevere to the end? We know that thy arm is stretched forth to aid us: we know that a crown is held over our heads, to reward our conquests; and that, if we lose it, it must be through our own neglect.

The apostle, St. Matthias, having zealously propagated the faith of Christ, finished his course by a glorious martyrdom. Let us die to sin and a wicked world. Let us, on all occasions, zealously promote the cause of God, and the good of souls, without the least regard to what the world will say. How shall we be able to resist to blood, if we suffer our daily failings to get the better of us.

Examine yourselves, and see how conformable your lives have been to the life of St. Matthias. Have recourse to his patronage, and pray that, as he was admitted into the college of the apostles, so you may be enrolled in the number of the saints.

### ASH WEDNESDAY.\*

ON this day we commence the solemn fast of Lent; and what are our dispositions? We know that we are sinners; and are we prepared, at this time, to return to the Lord, "in fasting, in weeping, and in mourning?"—Joel, ii. Ashes are put on our foreheads, as a testimony that the church admits us into the rank of penitents: are we disposed to be penitents indeed? Oh! let us weigh well the important task which we have engaged to perform. To be excluded from the church, to lay prostrate in the porch during the time of the holy sacrifice, to be clothed in sackcloth and ashes, to fast on bread and water, are severities which will not be required of us. The course of penance, to which we shall be subjected, will be comparatively light and easy. Let us enter upon it with joy, and let us be disposed rather to add to the law than to take away from it.

Being now ranked in the number of penitents, let us not belie that sacred character, by seeking after vain amusements, or indulging in dissolute or sensual enjoyments. Worldly pleasures are now to be laid aside. Self-will is to be curbed, and reduced into subjection. A spirit of recollection is to be acquired, and a love of retirement to be encouraged. Cares and solitudes, about the affairs of this miserable world, are to be removed; and a more than ordinary anxiety to be reconciled to God, and to be prepared for his eternal kingdom, is to animate our souls.

Ah! if our general conduct in Lent be the same as out of Lent—if there be no other difference but an unwilling compliance with the command of fasting and abstinence—how can it be said that we are of the number of penitents? And, if we are not of the number of penitents here what title shall we have to partake of their rewards hereafter? Our Lord condemned, in the severest terms, the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees; and shall we be better than hypocrites, if we place ourselves in the number of penitents, and still continue to walk with the followers of the world?

Examine what are the dispositions with which you receive the ashes on your forehead, on this day. If you discover that you are not disposed to do penance, according to your strength, pray earnestly to God that he would help you to renounce that love of the world, that love of ease and pleasure, which engage your affections, and which are directly opposite to the spirit of penance.

## THURSDAY AFTER ASH-WEDNESDAY.

### ON THE INSTITUTION OF LENT.

THE institution of Lent is primitive and apostolical. It has been religiously observed in all ages of the church down to us. Christ himself gave birth to this ordinance, and he sanctified

it in his own person.—Matt. iv. We are expressly commanded to offer up to God the tenths of our goods; and why not, likewise, the tithe of our lives, by an annual forty days penance? Does not the expiation of criminal excesses call for punishment? Do not the dispositions for worthily celebrating the memory of Christ's passion require such a sacrifice?

If we ever hope for mercy, “now is the acceptable time; now are the days of salvation.”—2 Cor. vi. Our good God knows that we are in sin: he sees the mouth of eternal death open to devour us; and, therefore, he calls aloud: *Now is the time*. What would not the suffering souls in purgatory give for this time? Would they think a forty days fast too rigorous? Would they seek an indulgence, and think that they were hardly dealt with by the church? No: they would certainly bless God, for having afforded them a time, wherein they might so easily satisfy for their sins.

Let us, therefore, embrace the opportunity, while it is in our power. If we have offended, by indulging our passions, let us make speedy amends, by rigorous self-denials. If a yielding inclination has been to us an occasion of sin, let us henceforward check it by a discreet severity; let us, by voluntary chastisements, now sue for pardon. “Spare, O Lord, spare thy people” (Joel, ii.): cast us not, for ever, from thy face.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved to repair whatever has been neglected in the foregoing Lents. Let not fresh sins destroy the merit of your good endeavours. Carefully correspond with the intentions of the church, at this time. Invent not lame pretences to indulge nature. Let what may punish, and not what may please, be your rule during this season.

## FRIDAY AFTER ASH-WEDNESDAY.

## ON THE MOTIVES FOR FASTING.

WE are all sinners: we have many ways transgressed against the commands of God. We must make satisfaction for these offences, either in this world or in the next. Choose which you like best; but take into the account, that the most tormenting pains in this world are not equal to the pains of purgatory. Why, then, do we not fast, when, by this slender self-denial, we may make ample satisfaction to offended mercy?

Alas! we have sinned grievously; and, what is our greatest misery, we are insensible of our sins. The wrath of an exasperated God is waiting to devour us; he threatens aloud, yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed.—Jonas, iii. What, therefore, can we do better than fast with Nineveh? Although this pagan city had, for a long time, been deluged in sin, yet, by a general fast, she found mercy. May not we find the same? Let us imitate her.

One of the best means for curbing our passions, and taming the violent stubbornness of our hearts, is holy fasting; for, by fasting, we allay the heat of concupiscence that burns within us, and draw down divine blessings on our helpless selves. We cannot doubt of succour, when we have so many instances of the efficacy of fasting. Samuel and Sampson were the fruits of their mother's fasting: fasting prepared Daniel for heavenly visions, and the sanctified Baptist for a forerunner of Christ. Nothing renders us more formidable to the enemy than this pious exercise. Ah! let us "turn to the Lord with all our hearts, in fasting, weeping, and mourning."—Joel, ii.

Examine yourselves, and resolve to be punctual in this duty. Let not every slight indisposition of body, or weakness of constitution, exempt you from it. Seek only those indulgences which are truly necessary. Fast on the days



commanded by the church, and after the manner they are ordained. Let a sorrow for sin and the practice of virtue accompany your fasts.

## SATURDAY AFTER ASH-WEDNESDAY.

### ON THE METHOD OF FASTING.

How little will it avail us to fast from flesh, if we do not, at the same time, abstain from sin! This is to fast like Pharisees, but not like Christians. It is to worship God and Belial at the same altar; and what higher indignity than this can be offered to God? What should we think of a malefactor who, in the very act of appealing for mercy, should give his judge a box on the ear? It is nearly a similar case with that of the person who fasts, and yet still retains an affection for sin.

Good God! deliver us from this unhappy blindness. Grant that we may so fast from all kinds of sin, and from the occasions of sin, as to find mercy in these days of reconciliation. We know that to fast, in the ways of sin, is the fast of devils and damned souls, who eat nothing, and yet never cease cursing and blaspheming the God who made them.

Are our passions strong? We must labour to weaken them. Are our affections fixed on creatures? We must endeavour to withdraw them. Have we cherished self-love? We must seasonably check it. Have we been slothful in devotion? We must spur on nature. Have we neglected the sacraments? We must resolve on a redress. Have we slighted the poor? We must make amends by alms-deeds. In a word, we must correct all failings. Do these zealous endeavours accompany our fasts? If so, they cannot fail of finding acceptance with heaven. They will be the very fasts that God hath chosen.

Examine yourselves, and to your exterior fast join an

interior fast from sin. Let not custom, but your unsatisfied-for sins, be the motive of your fasting. Offer up your fasts with a holy intention, and they will assuredly prove a most grateful sacrifice. Alas! when you shall have done your best, you will fall far short of the primitive Christians, whose lives were a rigorous and perpetual penance.

## FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

### ON THE FAST OF LENT.\*

MOSES and Elias fasted forty days. Our Saviour fasted forty days in the wilderness. The apostles, the first disciples, and all pious Christians, in every age and nation, have fasted forty days. And shall we think it hard to follow such illustrious examples? Moses and Elias, who may be said to represent the *law* and the *prophets*, and our blessed Saviour, who is "the author and finisher of our hope" in the "new law," (Heb. xii.), fasted the whole forty days, without eating or drinking; and shall we refuse to submit to the few restraints which are laid on our sensual appetite at this time? The primitive disciples and Christians indiscriminately, for twelve hundred years and more, abstained from flesh, fish, and every thing that proceeded from flesh, and likewise from fermented liquors, during these forty days; and shall we, with all the indulgences granted to us, be sad and sorrowful under the light burden which we have to carry? The followers of the impostor, Mahomet, even to this day, fast from all kind of food and drink, from the rising of the sun, in the morning, to the rising of the stars, in the evening, during their annual fast; and shall we, Christians, bear impatiently a little hunger, or a few trivial pains of body, arising from the want of food?

Alas! we can bear fatigues in the pursuit of pleasure; and we submit to pains, colds, and other effects, which are sometimes brought on by inordinate dissipation: and shall we be

then only cowards—then only impatient of pain—when we have to walk in the footsteps of our Lord and his saints, and to suffer for our sins? Oh! where is our piety! where is our detestation of sin! where are our desires of sanctifying our souls, and of being eternally happy!

Examine yourselves, and see how you are disposed to spend this holy time of Lent. It is a tithe of the year justly due to your God. He claims it, and ordains that it be spent in fasting and mourning for your sins. Your forefathers paid him this just tribute. Take care that you do not refuse it, lest he, hereafter, should refuse to admit you to a participation of their rewards.

## FIRST MONDAY IN LENT.

### ON THE RULES OF LENT.\*

FASTING is a restraint on the sensual appetite. It is a kind of warfare with the flesh. Consequently it is the more effectual in its operations, in proportion as it weakens the flesh, by depriving it of the usual incentives of its passions, repletion, and ease. In the primitive ages, the rules for the fast of Lent were very severe; and their severity caused them to answer the desired end. In these times, there is little severity. But even now, the following rules are strictly to be observed: first, to abstain from flesh meat, eggs, and cheese, on all days, except when dispensation is granted by a bishop; and then only to be taken once in the day, except on Sunday: secondly, to eat but one meal in the day: thirdly, not to take that meal before mid-day.

These are the rules enjoined by the church in these times. And are not these rules a proof of the decay of piety in the minds of the generality of Christians? When we look back, and see our brethren of former times fasting till the setting of the sun, and then only satisfying their hunger with coarse

bread and vegetables, or dried fruits ; and then turn to the Christians of these times, and see them making a hearty meal, as soon after noon as they please, on every delicacy that their means will allow, and several days of the week on flesh meat (not speaking of the trifle allowed in the morning, and the collation at night), what are we to think of the decay of piety which obliged the church to authorise these relaxations ? But, much more, what are we to think of the unhappy tepidity of those amongst us who are unwilling to observe even these few rules, and who are seeking every pretext to evade them, either by obtaining a dispensation without sufficient cause, or by indulging their sensual appetite to the utmost limits that the *letter* of the law will allow ? Can these be said to be walking in the footsteps of their crucified Saviour ? Can these be said to be animated with the spirit of repentance ?

Examine how far you are disposed to observe the rules of Lent as they now stand. If your piety be sincere, your hatred of sin unfeigned, and your constitution robust, you will wish to emulate the first Christians in the severity of their repentance.

## FIRST TUESDAY IN LENT.

### ON DISPENSATIONS FROM FASTING DURING LENT.\*

OH ! were we truly animated with the love of God, and did we feel the enormous weight of the guilt of sin, how willing should we be to offer up the sacrifice of penitential works ! how ready should we be to chastise our bodies by fasting and abstinence ! We should then feel more anguish of mind from being obliged, through weakness of constitution, to seek a dispensation, than we should feel sorrow at the prospect of the privations which are required at this season. We should then feel greater desires of bringing forth worthy fruits of repentance, during these forty days, than we should feel

eagerness for the arrival of the conclusion of this season. In fact, our attention would be taken up with calculating what penance we had already done, and what we should be able to do, in order to disarm the anger of God, excited by our sins: and the time would appear short, when compared with the great work of atonement which was expected at our hands. These would be the sentiments of our souls, were we animated with a truly Christian spirit.

Ah! were these our dispositions, what would be our feelings, when weakness of constitution, or other causes, obliged us to apply for a dispensation? Would they not be feelings of sorrow, and anguish of mind? Should we not begin to tremble, lest, being excluded from the common exercises of penance here, we should be secluded from the fellowship of the truly penitent hereafter? Should we not be induced to examine minutely into ourselves, and see whether self-love did not suggest false or insufficient motives for a dispensation? And if a dispensation was absolutely necessary, should we not be determined to find out other means of penance, and, at all events, to refuse every unnecessary gratification?

Examine how you stand affected in this respect. There are some who cannot fast; and some, who, on account of particular circumstances, cannot even abstain. But all have it in their power to do penance, and to refuse to indulge in unnecessary things. Whatever your state may be, see whether you have this spirit of penance. If not, seek it without delay: for, “unless you do penance, you shall all perish.”—Luke, xiii.

## WEDNESDAY—FIRST WEEK IN LENT.

### ON THE PROPER USE OF DISPENSATIONS.\*

No one is allowed to take a dispensation when recourse can be had, conveniently, to his director. And no one is allowed to go beyond the dispensation which his particular circum-

stances may require. When, therefore, weakness of constitution, hard labour, or other causes, require that you should take more than one meal in the day, apply for a dispensation; and take notice that the dispensation, when granted, will not give you liberty to take more than what necessity demands.

It is a mistaken idea with some, that, because they are dispensed with, as to fasting, they may eat as much, and as often, as sensuality may suggest. But, how opposite is this to the spirit of penance! The person who has a dispensation ought to be particularly watchful over himself, lest the sensual appetite should lead him into indulgences which necessity does not require. Having no restraint but his own prudence, he ought to be particularly on his guard, and be ready to seize every means, and every opportunity, of denying himself, even in trifling things, when it can be done without injury. He ought to weigh every, even lawful, gratification, in the scales of piety, and ask himself, whether or not his particular circumstances will allow him to do without it.

Ah! if dispensations were used in this manner, how little would they injure the cause of piety! People of the weakest constitutions would find every day numberless opportunities of mortifying their sensual appetite, of denying their will, and of bringing forth fruits worthy of penance. People of every description would find means of offering up to God a sacrifice of atonement, which would be acceptable in his sight. For it is not so much the *severity* of the act of penance which the Lord regards in the infirm, as the *spirit* of penance in which it is performed.

Examine what use you have hitherto made of dispensations. Remember that you are not left at full liberty, merely because you cannot fast or abstain. You must still do penance; and if you cannot do it one way, you must do it another. Your flesh must be crucified, or your vices and concupiscences will not be subdued. You must suffer with Christ, or you will not reign with him.

## THURSDAY—FIRST WEEK IN LENT.

## ON DRINKING BETWEEN MEALS ON FASTING DAYS.\*

Is it lawful to drink between meals on fasting days? This question may be answered satisfactorily to the pious Christian, by another question: is it agreeable to the spirit of penance, to indulge the sensual appetite beyond necessity, in those things which it particularly craves after? Although, taking it in an abstract point of view, it may not break the fast to take a small quantity of nourishing or refreshing liquor when necessity requires it, yet it must be said that, when that necessity does not exist, such an indulgence is contrary to the spirit of penance, and, consequently, that it is not expedient. Penance ought to be our grand object at this time; and everything that is not according to the spirit of penance ought to be considered as forbidden to true penitents.

The church has not absolutely declared that the fast is not broken by drinking between meals. But is the penitent to indulge himself in everything that is not absolutely forbidden? Is the *letter of the law* to be the rule for a sincere Christian? The Pharisees were strict to *the letter of the law*, but against whom are more severe denunciations uttered by our Saviour?

At all events, supposing that a certain latitude may be allowed in this respect, when sufficient cause requires it, it is acknowledged by all that spending the afternoon, or even hours after dinner in drinking, even although it be on account of friends or company—that frequenting public-houses, and there spending time and money, is as gratifying to the sensual appetite as many meals would be, and, consequently, that it would be as criminal in the sight of God as a formal transgression against the rules of fasting. For what would be the fast if these things were allowed?

Examine how you have conducted yourselves in this respect. Remember that penance is the object of the fast.

If, by drinking, you frustrate that object, you do not the penance which is required of you. You may be said to be building with one hand, and pulling down with the other—to be paying your debts, and yet to have the same debts standing against you. And is this the part of prudence? Is this the wisdom which a Christian ought to possess?

## FRIDAY—FIRST WEEK IN LENT.

### ON SANCTIFYING OUR FASTS BY PRAYER AND ALMS-DEEDS.

FASTING, of itself, will not answer the great ends for which it was enjoined, and, consequently, we must not think that all is done as soon as we have complied with this commandment. We have more enemies than the flesh to encounter. We have to fight against the world and the devil; and unless we turn our arms against these and subdue them, the emaciating of the flesh by fasting will not suffice.

The world is seeking to dazzle our eyes by its vain pomps, and to make us in love with riches, by the means of which all its honours and pleasures are to be purchased. Against this enemy we must fight, by taking off our affections from earthly things, and by liberal alms-deeds to the poor. The devil, likewise, is always on the watch, “going about, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”—1 Pet. v. Him we must resist by humble and fervent prayer.

Ah! surrounded as we are by such formidable enemies, what a happiness it is that we have arms calculated to defeat them all. Let us, therefore, be strong in faith, and relying on the assistance of the Almighty, let us go forth manfully to battle. Let no sentiment of self-love cause us to spare this criminal flesh, which it is our duty to crucify. Let no sentiments of worldly prudence cause us to be sparing in our acts of benevolence to the distressed. And let no sentiments of presumptuous confidence in our own strength, cause us to



neglect to apply, by frequent and fervent prayer, “to the throne of mercy, for seasonable aid.”—Heb. iv.

Examine in what manner you attend to these essential points. These three virtues of fasting, prayer, and alms-deeds, must never be separated, for their close alliance alone will enable you to overpower that *triple* alliance of the flesh, the devil, and the world, which is formed against you.

## SATURDAY—FIRST WEEK IN LENT.

### ON THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER.

SALVATION is our great business; there is no attaining to it without the assistance of the grace of God, and there are no surer means of obtaining this grace than by prayer: “Ask, and it shall be given to you.”—Luke, xi. We must pray. Happy necessity which obliges us to own our dependance on God, and puts us in the method of true humility. We have a natural propensity to sin; we are beset on every side with threatening enemies—the flesh, the devil, and the world, with united forces conspire our ruin. What shall we do? Fly we must. But whither? To God, borne on the wings of prayer.

Our Saviour’s life was an uninterrupted course of prayer. He retired to a lonesome desert, where, for the space of forty days and nights, he was employed in prayer. After he had laboured all the day in the conversion of souls, “he spent the night in prayer.”—Luke, vi. As he lived in the exercise, so he gave up his soul in prayer, and in prayer even for his enemies: “Father, forgive them.”—Luke, xxiii. Why all this? Was it for himself? No: it was to convince us of the necessity of prayer.

O sweetest Saviour! we receive with thankfulness this divine spirit—our daily wants demonstrate its necessity; we embrace it as bequeathed to us by a most tender parent—we will cherish and preserve this sacred pledge of love to the end of

our days, for it is then only we should cease to live, when we cease to pray.

Examine yourselves, and pray that you may vanquish the enemies of your soul. Pray that you may be no more slaves to pride, covetousness, drunkenness, swearing, or brutal impurities—pray that you may disengage your affections from a corrupt world—pray that you may die a happy death—“Pray always.”—Luke, xviii.

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

### ON THE ADVANTAGES OF PRAYER.

FERVENT prayer penetrates the clouds. God will never deny our requests, when duly offered. We have Christ's words for it: “Amen, amen, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you; ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.”—John, xvi. Ah! what encouragement have we here to pour forth our souls in humble prayer!

Does the *flesh* strive to allure us with its impure baits? Prayer is an excellent fence against those *concupiscences*. Does the world attack us with its criminal excesses? Prayer is a strong barrier against all *concupiscence of the eyes*. Does the devil tempt us to the ruin of our souls? Prayer has, and will defeat him. It is a sure weapon against *the pride of life*. Happy prayer! which thus protects us against the rage of our enemies, and effectually pleads our cause before the throne of merey.

St. Peter's cross, the sword of St. Paul, the severed head of the Baptist, St. Laurence's gridiron, the tears of Magdalen, the hair-cloth of confessors, the racks of martyrs, would never have rendered them such triumphant saints, had they not been fortified by the spirit of prayer. By prayer they were absorbed in God; by prayer they were changed, by a thrice

happy transformation, into God himself—"O Lord, how sweet is thy spirit!" (Wisd. xii.), how beneficial is the spirit which thou hast left us!—the spirit of prayer which thou hast recommended to us!

Examine yourselves, and resolve to follow the good advice of St. Paul, "Pray without ceasing."—1 Thess. v. Pray when you awake from sleep; pray before sleeping; pray for your friends, and for your enemies; in the time of temptation, pray as earnestly as seamen in a storm, who are every moment lifting up their trembling hands and weeping eyes to heaven. Let the innocence of your lives be a continual prayer.

## MONDAY—SECOND WEEK IN LENT.

### ON THE CONDITIONS OF PRAYER.

PROBABLY not a day passes over our heads, but we say our prayers; and yet, according to appearance, we are nothing the better for them. Our lives are as dissipated as ever: we are still subject to our usual weaknesses and failings; humour and inclination keep the upper hand, and push us on to almost everything we do. How comes this? What can be the reason that our prayers have so little effect, after all the assurances that Christ has given, of granting our petitions? The reason is evident, we pray not as we ought.

We are to humble ourselves in the presence of God. We are to apply to him with the same spirit as beggars apply for charity—as a sick man applies to a physician—as a criminal sues for mercy to his judge? Alas! how unworthy are we, wretched worms, to ask a favour, and even personally of him, in whose presence the very angels tremble.

Our prayers must be fervent. What we pray for is, the *grace and love of God*—the source of happiness in this world, and of eternal happiness in the next. Does not such a petition demand our most earnest attention? In our

temporal addresses we beg and pray; we are neither cold nor slothful, but, on the contrary, anxiously solicitous to gain our point. Shall we be less concerned in the business of eternity?

An unshaken *constancy* must accompany our prayers. God many times grants to perseverance what he denies to prayer. Had the Cananean woman left our Saviour, as soon as she received the first sharp rebuke, her daughter, probably, would not have been dispossessed. Grace would lose its value, heaven would sink beneath our care, if we could obtain, at any time, what we want, by a single sigh or by uttering a few words.

Examine yourselves, and let your prayers be accompanied with these three conditions, *humility*, *fervour*, and *perseverance*. If these be wanting, your prayers will turn to little account. Be sure to avoid all mortal sin; for the prayers of the wilful sinner will not prevail. His sins will draw down the divine vengeance on his head, instead of his prayers obtaining mercy. Be but as much in earnest, and as solicitous in your prayers, as you are in your petitions to some temporal power, and your requests will be granted.

## TUESDAY—SECOND WEEK IN LENT.

### ON DISTRACTIONS IN PRAYER.

It is a common thing to be distracted in time of prayer. In the better sort of Christians, this arises from the weakness of nature, and from the artifices of the devil, who labours all he can to discourage them at that time in their pious undertakings. In indolent Christians, it arises from sloth, from the little concern they have of advancing in virtue, and from their eager affections for the things of the world: for, “where their treasure is, there are their hearts also.”—Matt. vi.

Distractions will not injure us, provided they are not voluntary. Let us not be too uneasy about them, especially when we reflect that they are sometimes the effect of mercy.

They are sometimes permitted for the trial of our humility, in order to make us sensible of our own weakness, and of our total dependance on Providence. They are sometimes permitted as a punishment for past neglects, and in order to rouse our drooping thoughts. They are oftentimes permitted as a trial for our patience, and consequently, for the purpose of augmenting our glory in heaven. Why then are we troubled?

O God! I do not wonder that I am subject to distractions. I see that I can do nothing, even when I most desire it, unless I am supported by thy helping grace, which I little deserve. Pardon, I beseech thee, all my past wilful neglects. I am resolved, for the future, speedily to recall all my wandering thoughts. I will endeavour to remember in whose presence I am, and what I say to him. A holy intention, with a petition for thy grace, shall precede my prayers.

Examine yourselves, and see if these are your good purposes. Be careful to shun all wilful distractions in the time of prayer. To do otherwise, would be to mock God. Be not dejected at unwilful distractions. Your prayers will not be less fruitful on their account. It will be a great help to you, to reflect in what place you are, and to whom you speak. "O Lord! the meditation of my heart is always in thy sight."—Ps. xix.

## WEDNESDAY—SECOND WEEK IN LENT.

### ON MORNING PRAYER.

MORNING prayer is one of the most essential duties of a Christian. God is our Lord, and therefore we ought to serve him: he is our last end, and therefore our first thoughts ought to be directed to him. "The wise man shall in the morning early give his heart to the God who made him."—Eccl. xxxix. Is this our practice? O Christians! let us not be outdone by pagans, in this duty of morning service.

Each moment of our lives provides us fresh instances of divine favours: and can we be too forward in making a return of gratitude for them? Many have gone to sleep in good health, and have never waked again. A death equally sudden, and perhaps even an eternal death, might have been our fate long ago, had not a providential mercy preserved us. And shall not the first thoughts of our awakened hearts be an humble thanksgiving for so great a mercy? Had we a true love for God, and a real concern for ourselves, our morning thoughts would be directed to him.

Let us only consider the dangerous and daily occasions of sin in which we are engaged: the violent temptations which surround us: the business of the world, which almost continually occupies our thoughts, and we shall be obliged to acknowledge the absolute necessity of morning prayer. "In the morning, O Lord, thou wilt hear my voice."—Ps. v. I will offer up, and consecrate my first thoughts to thee, that I may spend the ensuing day in thy service.

Examine yourselves, and be faithful in the performance of this most necessary duty. Make an offering of yourselves and of all the actions of the day, every morning of your lives, in acts of adoration, love, and thanksgiving, and in acts of sorrow and detestation for your past offences. Let the like devotion be your evening exercise. Examine your consciences, and let no pretext cause you to neglect this duty. Beg the grace of a happy death; and finish every day, as if it were to be the last of your life.

#### THURSDAY—SECOND WEEK IN LENT.

ON THE VAIN EXCUSES OF THE WORLD IN RESPECT TO PRAYER.

WHAT need I pray? says the worldling: God knows my wants. Very true. But he expects that we likewise should know them, and acknowledge them by fervent prayer. "Ask, and

it shall be given to you.”—Luke xi. Well, I would willingly pray, continues the worldling, but I can find no time for it. A poor excuse indeed! We can find time for eating and drinking, for unnecessary amusements, for superfluous visits, and idle conversation; and none for prayer! although eternity depends on the performance of it!

I would willingly pray, but the business of the world takes up my thoughts. Alas! for this very reason we ought to pray the more. How can we expect success in business, if we neglect to recommend it to the hands of Providence, on whom all our good depends? But my concerns are of importance. What then? Is there any temporal concern worthy to be compared with the concerns of your soul? However pressing our business may be, can we not set aside one quarter of an hour for prayer, or raise our hearts to God by pious ejaculations amidst our employments?

It is in vain to pray, says the worldling: my grievous and repeated crimes make me despair of mercy! Unhappy delusion! Does not our Blessed Saviour encourage every sinner with, “Come to me all you who are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you?”—Matt. xi. Does not the Psalmist say: “Call upon God in the day of tribulation?”—Ps. xlix. Ought the sick man to neglect having recourse to his physician, because his disease is desperate? ought the criminal to refuse to sue for pardon, merely because his crimes are heinous?

Examine yourselves, and say, with the publican: “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.”—Luke, xviii. Say, with the church: “We sinners do beseech thee to hear us.” Let no unchristian pretences enter your thoughts. When you go to prayer, make choice of a convenient time and place, the better to recollect your wandering thoughts. Devotion does not consist in saying a *multitude* of prayers, but in saying your prayers *well*.

## FRIDAY—SECOND WEEK IN LENT.

## ON ALMS-DEEDS.

ALMS-DEEDS ought to accompany our fasting and prayer. Dives is lost: his crime was hard-heartedness to the poor: and, for that reason, his unhappy portion is with the reprobate.—Luke xvi. The world shall be judged, and the last definitive sentence on the wicked shall be: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,” because “I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat.”—Matt. xxv.

God is our Lord, to whom we must pay our homage: and since he himself has declared that no sacrifice is more grateful to him than mercy, why do we not offer it to him? Are the good things, which we have received from the kind hand of providence, to be thrown away on vanity? or, are they to supply the cravings of an extravagant heart? No: we are God’s stewards, and therefore we are under an obligation of feeding his poor children with the superfluities, at least, of the treasures entrusted to our care.

Were Jesus in person to beg an alms of us, we would not refuse him; and do not the poor represent his person? Christ says that they do: “Whatsoever you have done to one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it to me.”—Matt. xxv. We have no better expedient whereby to redeem our sins, than alms-deeds. What an unspeakable comfort it will be to us, when all those poor Christians, whom we have charitably relieved, shall present our souls before the tribunal of Christ, at the moment of death, and cry aloud for mercy in our behalf.

Examine yourselves, and take care that you are not backward in the practice of this charity. Remember, that as much as you throw away in sinful diversions, or in the gratification of the lusts of nature, or in the support of pride, so much you barbarously steal from the poor. Let not the



eries of perishing widows and orphans call for vengeance against you. Let not *affection*, but the *indigences* of the poor, guide your hand; and let what is done be done for Christ's sake.

## SATURDAY—SECOND WEEK IN LENT.

### ON SPIRITUAL ALMS-DEEDS.

It is in the power of every Christian to perform spiritual works of mercy: and it is a duty imposed on every Christian. It is the duty of the pastor, and of every well-informed layman, to instruct the ignorant. Men in office are obliged to reprehend the faulty—parents their children—masters their servants: otherwise they shall be hereafter answerable for their neglect. All are obliged to give good example, to forgive injuries, to pray for themselves and their distressed brethren, to lament the unhappy condition of sinners, and the blindness of unbelievers. Are not these works the best of alms? Is not this the most acceptable sacrifice that can be offered to heaven?

A soul is the master-piece of the works of God, framed to his own likeness, and redeemed by the blood of his only Son; and can we unconcernedly see it perish? Millions are running headlong to destruction: millions are on the brink of the infernal precipice; many of our friends are in a desperate way: and shall we not lend them a helping hand, when it may be so easily done? Why do not we pray for them, and bewail their misery? Why do not we admonish them of their approaching ruin? Why do not we correct them, and give them good example? Example is oftentimes more effectual in the conversion of a sinner, than the most eloquent tongues of men and angels.

O Jesus, pardon my past neglects. A zeal for souls shall henceforward be the practice of my life. Thy only object was

the *conversion of sinners*, and it shall be mine. "To every one thou hast given the charge of his neighbour," (Eccl. xvii.) and I am resolved to attend to it. Can I possibly love thee, and not prevent as much as possible the offences committed against thee? Can I love my neighbour and pay no regard to his eternal welfare?

Examine yourselves, and be constant in the exercise of works of mercy *spiritual*. They are a grateful alms, and the best you can bestow. They will not fail of a reward in heaven.

### THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

#### ON THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

"CHRIST suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps."—1 Pet. ii. We are willing to follow the example of a good friend, and we suffer nothing to hinder us. Let our prince set the most difficult example, let him hazard his life in the furious heat of battle, we are prepared to die with him. Christ is our friend, and our very best friend; and are we as ready to follow him? He is our king, to whom no earthly king can be compared; and are we ambitious of serving him? It would be a happy ambition indeed.

Jesus Christ has ransomed our souls with the price of his blood. By dying for us he has raised us to the highest degree of honour; he has given us a title to the kingdom of heaven; and are we disposed to follow his example to the effusion of our blood? He desires no more than, after having given us entirely his own most loving heart, that we should, reciprocally on our parts, return him ours.

Christ has humbled himself, that we, Christians, should do the same at the sight of our offences. He meekly bore with the insults of the Jews, for our example. He cured the deaf, the dumb, and the blind, to inflame our hearts with the love of fraternal charity. He led a poor and obscure life, to recom-

mend to us to love poverty of spirit and to fly vain-glory. He drank of the bitter cup of affliction, to engage us to submit to the scourges which the divine justice shall inflict upon us. And, after all, shall we do nothing for ourselves? Ah! that we could say from our hearts: "Master, I will follow thee wheresoever thou shalt go."—Matt. viii.

Examine yourselves, and if it be your sincere desire to extirpate pride and the love of brutal pleasures from your hearts, and to wean your affections from a vain world, be sure to meditate often on the life of Christ. By attentively fixing your eyes on your divine Master, you will most effectually surmount the attempts of your enemies, and come at length, to your unspeakable comfort, to "form him in you."—Gal. iv.

## MONDAY—THIRD WEEK IN LENT.

### ON THE IMITATION OF CHRIST.

"I AM the light of the world: he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness."—John. viii. Had we a true feeling for Jesus Christ, or did we love him with our whole hearts, it would be natural to us to copy his example. One of the most expressive arguments of love, is a passionate desire of being united to the person whom we love. And in what does that union consist, but in a union of hearts? How unspeakable a happiness, therefore, must it be, to have our hearts united to the heart of Jesus! to have our hearts burning with the love of Jesus! to feel them inflamed with *his* zeal for the salvation of souls, adorned with his innocence, and emboldened by his patience to suffer any persecution!

Children naturally imitate their parents, and one friend imitates another. Jesus Christ is a loving father to us, and a true friend; and are we not excited to an imitation of him? Our eternal interest depends upon it, and will not this move us?

What is more honourable than to walk in the footsteps of a Man-God? What more noble than to fight and conquer with him? Our blessed Lord requires nothing from us but what he himself has done before us. If he invites us to carry our cross, has he not carried his, with all its weight? If he exhorts us to use violence against our passions, has he not done the same beforehand? If he obliges us to pardon injuries, was not his expiring breath on the cross, "Father, forgive them?"—Luke, xxiii.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to transcribe the virtues of your divine model into the copy of your lives. Let the example of Christ be the rule of your actions; let it be the object of your thoughts. In your studies, at your work, when you awake, before you sleep, at all times, and in all occurrences of life, think on Jesus.

## TUESDAY—THIRD WEEK IN LENT.

ON THE CONFORMITY OF A CHRISTIAN TO THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

"I HAVE given you an example, that, as I have done to you, so do you also."—John, xiii. This is what Christ says to every one of us. To be a Christian is to be conformed to Jesus Christ: to deviate from him is, in fact, to be a heathen. "I am in vain a Christian," says St. Bernard, "if I follow not Christ."

Jesus Christ has taught that the greatest glory is founded on humility; that the happiness of a Christian is to be found amidst sufferings; and that the most valuable riches consist in true poverty of spirit. He has told us that we must renounce ourselves, and that we must check our inclinations. Let us examine our hearts, and see if these are our sentiments. If not, there is no conformity in us to the life of Christ.

Jesus Christ loved sufferings; he loved humiliations; and he loved them because they were the only means of propa-

gating the glory of his heavenly Father, and the salvation of mankind. Do we partake of the like affections? Do we resignedly submit to the divine appointments? Are we ready to engage in what concerns the honour of God, or our neighbour's good. This it is *to be conformed to Christ*.

The *end* of Christ's actions was the *glory of his Father*. His curing the lame, the deaf, and the blind; his preaching, exhorting, and converting souls; his eating, sleeping, and whatever else he did, was always referred to the glory of his Father. Is the honour of God the *end* of our performances? It must be so, if we think of being conformed to the life of Christ. There is no action of life, even the most indifferent, but may be sanctified by a Christian intention.

Examine yourselves, and conclude with this humble confession of your past failings: "Most merciful Saviour, I acknowledge thy goodness, in making me a Christian, and I am confounded that I have so little corresponded with the character. I crave the grace of a hearty repentance, and that thou wouldst enable me, for the future, to conform my life to thy unblemished original."

## WEDNESDAY—THIRD WEEK IN LENT.

### ON THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

THE measure of love is to love without measure. Such was the love which Jesus Christ bore to us. He loved us more than we love ourselves: he loved us more than the blessed in heaven can love him, although they are swallowed up in love. He preferred the love of us to the riches of his glory: he left them to redeem us. He preferred the love of us to his own dear life: he died to save us. Ah! let us never be so very ungrateful as not to return love for love.

We love our temporal friends; and shall we not love the best of friends, Jesus Christ? Although he invites us by

promises, presses us with blessings, solicits us by inspirations, obliges us by threats, to give him our hearts, he has no other object in view than our good. Little advantage will accrue to him from a return of our love. When we have done our utmost, we are still “unprofitable servants.”—Luke, xvii. Christians, Christ has loved us to an infinite degree: he loved us when we knew him not: he loved us when, in the persons of the Jews, we conspired his death: and although, perhaps, at this very time we crucify him again, he loves us still: and, seeing that a charm, as it were, is necessary to soften our stubborn hearts, behold, he composes a *love-potion*—he gives us his body and blood for our food. O how unspeakable is the love my Jesus bears me!

My soul, were thy Saviour to put the question to thee, as he did to St. Peter: “Peter, lovest thou me?” couldst thou answer, “Lord, thou knowest that I love thee?”—John, xxi. Would not the little scruple thou makest of offending him, thy backwardness in virtue, thy ingratitude and insensibility in regard to past favours, belie thy words?

Examine yourselves, and see if you have not been cold in the love of Jesus. Rectify past omissions; and let your prayer be that of St. Augustine: “O Lord, I know that thou dost command me to love thee; give me necessary grace to fulfil thy commands, and command what thou wilt.”

## THURSDAY—THIRD WEEK IN LENT.

### ON A CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST.

ALTHOUGH sin is, in a manner, infinite, inasmuch as it attacks an infinite majesty, yet, notwithstanding its malice, Christ, by his death, has made a superabounding satisfaction for all the most crying sins of mankind. He could have atoned for them by the least motion of his heart; but it was his will to suffer. The least pain would have been sufficient; but he would shed

his blood. The least drop of his blood would have been amply abundant; but he would shed every drop of it. Oh! how great a subject of confidence must it be to a Christian heart, to see such an overflow of merits, purchased by the sufferings of his dying Lord!

But for whom did Christ die? For us sinners. And as, in quality of our head, he has shared our miseries, so, on account of being his members, he has communicated to us the treasures of his grace. What motives of confidence! Who now can despair, when he considers that his God has satisfied for his sins, by dying for him? Yes, Christians, the ransom is paid; we have “a plentiful redemption.”—Ps. cxxix. It only remains that we seriously endeavour to apply the merits of our redemption to our helpless souls; for, without this application, we are still lost.

We will, then, confide in the merits of our Saviour. Let the devil beset us with the worst of his temptations; let him strive to oppress us with sadness of mind, or bodily afflictions, we have no reason to fear him, provided we seek refuge in the wounds of Jesus, or shelter ourselves within his heart, so often pierced with the love of us. “Great is my injustice,” says the pious St. Augustine, “but much greater is the justice of my Saviour.”

Examine yourselves, and always confide in the merits of your Redeemer. Let it animate you to bear up under the sharpest trials. In the time of temptation say from your hearts: “In thee, O Lord, I have hoped; let me not be confounded for ever.”—Ps. xxx.

## FRIDAY—THIRD WEEK IN LENT.

### ON THE PASSION OF CHRIST.

Oh! the mercies and love which our Lord and Saviour expressed towards us, during the course of his passion! How

continually ought they to occupy our thoughts! During the whole course of his mortal life, he had no other object in view but our salvation. He applied to no other business, during the course of his ministry, but to give instructions, by word and example, how we were to save our souls. And, during his passion, he did not refuse to submit to any of the ignominies and tortures which the justice of God required for our redemption.

Ah! we were the constant objects of his cares and solitudes. This world, and all it contains, engaged not his attention. We were the great *all*, if it may be so said, which he sought after; and shall we refuse to fix our thoughts on him? Shall we suffer a day, or even an hour, to pass over, without reflecting on the excess of his sufferings and love? He was absorbed, as it were, in his love for us; shall we not be absorbed in our love for him? His only desire was our salvation; shall we form any desires which are not agreeable to the same purpose? He renounced all the pleasures of the world, on purpose to admonish us that they were prejudicial to our salvation; shall we court these same pleasures, notwithstanding the example that he has set before us? He has given himself wholly to us; shall we refuse to give ourselves wholly to him, particularly when we consider that we ourselves shall be the only gainers by it? He suffered for us; shall we refuse to suffer for ourselves? Oh! let us frequently meditate on the excess of love which our Lord has shown towards us, particularly in his passion; and let us reflect on the motives of that love.

Examine whether you turn your thoughts, from time to time, to these subjects. During the season of Lent, you are particularly invited to meditate on the passion of Christ. Attend to it, therefore, frequently and fervently, that thereby you may be prepared to celebrate, with gratitude and love, the annual commemoration of his sufferings and death.



## SATURDAY—THIRD WEEK IN LENT.

ON DEVOTION TO THE PASSION OF CHRIST.\*

WHO was our Saviour? By what means has the knowledge of his divinity and his suffering been imparted to us? What are the duties which that knowledge imposes on us? Ah! he was the only Son of God—consubstantial with the Father—the *Word* eternal, by whom all things were made—the *Word* proceeding from the Father, who “was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us” (John, i.), and who “humbled himself, even to the death of the cross,” for our redemption.—Phil. ii. These mysteries were revealed to those who were preordained by God to receive his holy word, and to witness his humiliations and his glories; and their testimony has been handed down to us by the concurrent acknowledgment of all nations.

What are the duties imposed on us in consequence of this knowledge? That we should have the sufferings of our Saviour daily in our remembrance: and that we should be continually animated with the spirit of gratitude and love, for the benefits which his passion has purchased for us.

Aas! when we look into the world, how little do we see of this Christian spirit! May we not apply to the generality of mankind, these words of the Psalmist: “I looked on my right hand and beheld, and there was no one who would know me?”—Ps. cxli. Ah! truly may we say, that he seems even now to stand alone, and that there is hardly one who seems to know him by daily meditation on his sufferings. Let not this be our case. We have been particularly favoured with the knowledge of his mercies and love: and shall we be like unto those who know him not? Oh! let us meditate on his sufferings day and night. Let us turn away from the vanities of the world. Let us turn away from ourselves, that is, let us turn away our thoughts from our own sufferings and afflictions.

tions, and be absorbed in the contemplation of those alone which he has endured for the love of us.

Examine what is your devotion to the passion of Christ. St Paul says, "With Christ I am nailed to the cross."—Gal. ii. St. Ignatius, the martyr: "My love is nailed to the cross." Can you join with these fervent disciples, and say the same? Oh! "where your treasure is, there is your heart also."—Matt. vi. If your treasure be Christ crucified, your heart will be fixed in the contemplation of his sufferings. If the world be your treasure, your affections, and solitudes, and thoughts, will be chiefly centered in the world. Judge, therefore, for yourselves.

#### FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE BENEFITS OF FREQUENT MEDITATION ON THE PASSION OF CHRIST.\*

WHAT more beneficial subject of meditation can we have than the passion of Christ? Our Lord and Saviour in the midst of humiliations and sufferings, cannot occupy our thoughts without producing important effects. We firmly believe in his divinity: but when can the exercise of our faith be more profitable than when we see him "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity;" (Isa. liii.) when we see him submitting to be treated "as a worm and no man;" (Ps. xxi.) when we see that the glories of his divinity are entirely concealed; and that, in his humanity, he is treated by the whole world as *a seducer*, and as the *outcast of the people*?

We place our hopes in him. But what can be more encouraging to our hopes than the sight, as it were, of our Redeemer in the act of making atonement for our sins—in the act of destroying the hand-writing that was against us—in the act of opening the gates of heaven for our admission into its eternal abodes?

We feel a certain love for him: but what is so eminently calculated to enkindle the flames of love in our breasts, as the sight of our heavenly Lover, weeping, and suffering, and bleeding, and dying for the love of us?

We feel a certain sorrow for our sins: but what greater inducement to repentance can we have than the consideration of what our sins have cost the innocent Lamb of God? What can more effectually excite in our minds a horror for sin, than the reflection that its guilt could not be expiated by any other means than by the sufferings and death of an incarnate Deity?

Let us, then, frequently meditate on the passion of Christ. It will exercise our souls in the acts of faith, hope, love, and repentance. As often as we behold a crucifix, with what reason may we exclaim: O the justice of God! O the enormity of sin! O the value of our immortal souls in the eyes of the great Creator!

Examine whether you frequently meditate on this interesting subject. When the Israelites in the desert were stung by the fiery serpents, their cure was effected by fixing their eyes on the brazen serpent, which Moses had erected by the command of God. Be convinced that you, in the same manner, must frequently fix the eyes of your soul on your Saviour, exalted on the cross, in order to be freed from the effects, which have been caused in you by the stings of the infernal serpent.

## MONDAY—FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

ON THE INSTRUCTIVE LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM OUR SAVIOUR'S PASSION.\*

OBEDIENCE to established authority is a Christian virtue. We are all enjoined obedience, in *temporal* things, to our princes, rulers, and superiors; and in *spiritual* things, to our pastors. These again are to be obedient to the *higher powers*, and all united together are to be submissive to our supreme head—the Lord Jesus.

To encourage us in the practice of this great virtue, what a model have we before our eyes in the person even of our Lord himself! He was the sovereign and uncontrolled Master of all created things, for "by him all things were made;" (John, i.) and yet he was obedient to his own creatures: "he was obedient even to the death of the cross."—Phil. ii. Oh ye worldly proud! look up to this heavenly model, when you experience contradictions and insults. Look up to this eminent example, when your will is opposed by others, when your opinions are rejected or impugned by others. Look up and learn to be obedient to lawful authority, even when you are treated unjustly; and to bear with patience, as far as duty will allow, the untoward and disrespectful behaviour of those, who ought to be obedient to your will.

Humility is, likewise, a Christian virtue, and the foundation of every Christian virtue. And where shall we find so perfect a pattern of humility as in the person of our Lord? O ye heavens! behold the Lamb of God—the eternal Son of the Father—the Word—the second person of the blessed Trinity, incarnate, and dwelling in the midst of his creatures; and not only dwelling amongst them, but submitting to be buffeted by them, to be spit upon, to be crowned with thorns, scourged, treated as a mock king, and at length to be crucified by them! Oh! what humility was here! And shall we be proud? Shall we refuse to submit to humiliations? Shall we murmur and repine, when exposed to the lash of calumny and slander, or treated with affronts and indignities, or subjected to persecutions for justice sake?

Examine yourselves, and learn from the obedience and humility of your Saviour, to be attentive to the practice of those virtues, in all the various occurrences of life. Obedience will always be more profitable to you than resistance; and humility will contribute more effectually than pride, to exalt you in the eyes both of God and man.

## TUESDAY—FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

OTHER LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM OUR SAVIOUR'S PASSION.\*

ARE we visited with pains and sufferings? Are we exposed to losses and privations? Are we on the bed of sickness, and about to be called out of this world in the midst of our days? What an encouraging example of patience and resignation is presented to us in the passion of our Saviour! "He gave his body to the strikers, and his cheeks to them that plucked them."—Isa. l. Even in the prime of life, he submitted to be "led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before his shearer he opened not his mouth."—Isa. liii. He endured these things with patience, though they were inflicted on him by his own creatures. Shall not we submit cheerfully to trials of a like nature, when we know that it is God himself who imposes them on us?

Are we exposed to the malevolence of enemies? Are we pursued by evil tongues? Are we a parable of reproach among the wicked? What an encouragement to meekness and forbearance have we in the passion of our Saviour! He, "when he was reviled, did not revile: when he suffered, he threatened not: but delivered himself up to him, who judged him unjustly."—1 Pet. ii. Oh! may his meekness under persecution induce us to become, like him, "as men that hear not, and as dumb men, not opening our mouth."—Ps. xxxvii.

Are we tempted to call upon God for vengeance on our enemies? Oh! here again we see, in the passion of our Saviour, a pattern of sincere forgiveness, and of love even for enemies. In the midst of his most excruciating tortures, he prayed for his persecutors: he endeavoured to extenuate their guilt in the sight of his heavenly Father: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."—Luke xxiii.

Oh! may his powerful example produce a due effect on our minds.

Examine whether you walk in these footsteps, which your Saviour has marked out for you. Trace them out carefully; for they are the only footsteps which will lead you to the perfection of virtue here, and to its eternal reward hereafter.

### WEDNESDAY—FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

ON THE LOVE WHICH OUR SAVIOUR HAS MANIFESTED TOWARDS  
US IN HIS PASSION.\*

WHY did the Son of God suffer for us? Was it necessary for his *own glory* that he should shed his blood? Was it necessary for his happiness that man should be redeemed, and by redemption be entitled to partake of his glory? In a word, did he depend in any manner on man, either for glory or happiness? Nothing at all of this. For, what object is it to God to receive glory from man? His glory is centered in himself; and no created being can add to it, or take from it. His happiness, likewise, is centered in himself. It would not be increased, were all mankind to be saved: nor would it be diminished, were all mankind to be eternally lost. In fact, during the long course of an immeasurable eternity, which existed before any rational beings were created, he was infinitely happy in himself, and infinitely glorious; and when we consider that he is immutable, and free from the possibility of any alteration whatever, we must conclude that man, whether he be lost or saved, can produce no effect in him.

Why then did he suffer for us? It was out of pure love to us. It was that we might be happy. It was that we might be united to him in glory, and contemplate the wonders of his power, mercy, and love, during an endless eternity. Oh! blessed for ever be the mercy of my God. Let us “give praise to the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever. Let Israel now say

that he is good, that his mercy endureth for ever. Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy endureth for ever." For, "I shall not die, but shall live, and declare the works of the Lord."—Ps. cxvii.

Examine whether you meditate with due attention on the love which induced your Saviour to suffer for you. A more profitable subject cannot occupy your thoughts. It will contribute to withdraw your affections from the perishable things of this world, and to fix them on him, who alone is worthy of your love.

## THURSDAY—FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS ON THE LOVE OF CHRIST MANIFESTED  
TOWARDS US IN HIS PASSION.\*

OUR Lord did not only submit to suffer for us, but he consented to submit to every kind of reproach, indignity, and torture, which it is possible for man to suffer. "He became as a worm and no man, the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people."—Ps. xxi. Oh! what was it that induced our God to humble himself to this low degree? Had we sinned only through our *first parents*, then, perhaps, *justice* on the part of God would have required that means should have been provided for our regaining the state of innocence. But, when it is considered, that we not only sinned in *Adam*, but that we have sinned in *ourselves*, that we have been rebels to his holy will, and that the *justice* of God demands our condemnation to the second and eternal death, then what shall we say of the love which induced our Lord to suffer for us? How infinite was that love, which caused him to "bear our infirmities," and to "carry our sorrows," to be "wounded for our iniquities," and to be "bruised for our sins."—Isa. liii. How loudly does it call for a return on our part of gratitude and love!

Ah! truly may I, and may every sinner, say: "My Jesus

carried me in his heart. He knew my sins, and yet he did not hesitate to suffer for me. He wept, he prayed, he bled for me, although he knew that I was a rebel to his holy laws, and unworthy of his love. O that sacred—that adorable heart! Can I possess a place in that ardent furnace of love, and feel not the effects of its piercing flames? Can my heart remain cold and frozen in the midst of such heat? Dear Jesus! come to my aid. I feel not that ardour of love, which so much love on thy part demands of me. I feel not that readiness to renounce my own will for the love of thee which thy readiness to suffer for me, ought to inspire. May the fire of thy love, henceforward, take possession of my soul, and consume every affection, every desire which is not agreeable to thy blessed will.”

Examine what return you make to your Lord for the excess of love which he has manifested towards you. Be resolved to keep no part of your heart from him. Offer the whole to him, and pray that it may never be separated from him, either in life or death.

### FRIDAY—FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

ON THE SUFFERINGS WHICH OUR SAVIOUR ENDURED BEFORE HIS  
PASSION.\*

THE sufferings, which our Saviour endured for the redemption of us sinners, were not confined to the time of his passion only. He suffered for us during his confinement in his mother's womb. He suffered for us at his first entrance into the world. He suffered for us at the time of his circumcision, and during the whole period of his infancy. He suffered for us during the time that he was subjected to the fostering care of his reputed father, by labours, fatigues, self-denials, and subjection. Besides this, what did he not suffer, during his whole life, from the love, which burnt in his breast, for the salva-



tion of man, and which was not to take its effect, until the time arrived, which was appointed by his Father, for the manifestation of his coming? What did he not suffer, during the whole course of his ministry, from the malice, the perversity, the wickedness, the hardness of heart of his once chosen people? What did he not suffer from the ignorance, the stupidity, the earthly attachments, of the poor despised fishermen, whom he appointed to be the pillars of the stupendous edifice of the Christian church, which he was about to erect? What did he not suffer from the clear foresight, which he had, of all the tortures which he was to endure during the course of his passion? What did he not suffer from the knowledge, which he had, that all his sufferings would be unprofitably endured for the majority of his poor creatures;—and that the more he endured, the greater would be their punishment, on account of the perverseness and hardness of their hearts? Oh! when we reflect upon these his sufferings previous to his passion, truly may we say: “All you that pass by the way, behold and see, if there be sorrow like unto my sorrow.”—Lament. i.

Examine whether you daily meditate on the sufferings of your Saviour. The whole history of his life is a history of self-denial and suffering. No worldly festivities and joys, no parties merely of pleasure and amusement filled up his time. All was pain, and suffering, and fatigue, and solicitude, and torture for the salvation of men. Take care that you do not seek your consolation here, lest you should not be partakers of the blessings which his sufferings have purchased for you.

## SATURDAY—FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

### ON JESUS IN THE GARDEN.

OUR dearest Saviour has entered the garden of Gethsemani. See how, already oppressed with grief, he lies prostrate on the ground, to the astonishment of men and angels. Hear his

moans! "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."—Matt. xxvi. The soul of my God sorrowful! At death, when he has legions of angels ready at a call! At death, when it is he that has encouraged so many thousands to lay down their lives, fearless of it! No, my soul; it is not death, but thy sins that cause him to grieve. He foresees the ingratitude of his Jewish children, in barbarously tormenting him. He foresees how many Christians, by their repeated sins and sacrilegious communions, will be sucking poison from his precious blood; and this it is that causes him to grieve.

O Jesus! no one but thyself can conceive the excess of thy afflicted heart. Sin is the cause of it: I am resolved, therefore, to detest it. No wonder that thou desirest the bitter cup to be removed from thee, for it is bitter indeed. But, "Father, not my will, but thine be done."—Matt. xxvi. Was there ever such resignation? Christians, let us copy it; it is intended for our instruction. Let us resign ourselves under the divine appointments.

Judas, whither so fast? Wilt thou betray thy Lord with a kiss? Remember, Oza was struck dead for only touching the Ark of God: "it were better for thee that thou hadst never been born." But no threats, no endearments, can soften his stony, covetuous heart. Behold, he advances, and betrays his master with a kiss. How does Jesus receive him? "Judas, my friend and apostle, did I not this very night feed thee with my body and blood? and wilt thou, notwithstanding, thus unkindly use me?"

Examine yourselves, and be sure not to take part in the treachery of Judas. By every mortal sin, you not only betray, but you crucify your Lord.

## PASSION-SUNDAY.

ON THE ABANDONMENT OF THE APOSTLES.

O YE elect of God! ye great pillars of the magnificent church of the new law! how far do you follow your Lord in his painful progress towards the redemption of mankind? You thought that you were strong and fervent in his cause. You conceived that you had resolution to "go also, and die with him."—John. xi. But how different is the hour of trial from the hour of tranquillity and peace! A few hours ago, when the enemy was concealed, you were all strength and courage. "Lord," you said, "here are two swords."—Luke xxii. And when the Lord said, "it is sufficient," you conceived that all was secure. Oh! with what reason does St. Paul say: "Let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall."—1 Cor. x. You had recently assisted at the institution of the most adorable sacrament of the altar, and had partaken thereof. Your hearts were burning with love, and you seemed to stand on the firmest ground. But, alas! no sooner is your Lord in the hands of his enemies, than your courage is gone. You fly from him; and whither do you fly for refuge and protection?

But why do we wonder at the pusillanimity of the apostles? Is not our own criminal life, by far, more reprehensible? They had not witnessed the incontrovertible proofs of his divinity—his *resurrection* and *ascension* into heaven. We know that he is risen, and has entered into his glory; and yet how often do we abandon him, when the world presents more pleasing prospects to our view? How often do we renounce him, when self-interest interferes with duty? How often do we fall away from him, even after we have assisted at the holy sacrifice, and partaken of the adorable sacrament? Truly, our own base conduct ought alone to excite our astonishment;

and our own manifold crimes ought chiefly to excite our regret.

Examine how far you have followed the apostles in their abandonment, and be resolved to follow them likewise in their repentance. They rose again, and ultimately fulfilled the duties of their high vocation. Do you rise again, and be, as they were, zealous advocates of the laws of God, and faithful ministers of his word, even until death. “Do this, and you shall live.”—Luke x.

## MONDAY IN PASSION-WEEK.

### ON THE FALL OF JUDAS.\*

AN apostle is fallen! Even one of the twelve—one who had accompanied his Lord during the whole course of his ministry—one who had witnessed all his wonderful works,—one who had been made acquainted with all the mysteries of the kingdom of God,—one who had tasted of all the good things prepared for the elect,—one who had partaken even of the sacrament of the new law, the body and blood of Christ,—one who had received power to consecrate the same in the holy sacrifice,—one, in fine, who had associated with his Lord in the strictest bonds of amity, and had been appointed to be one of the supporting pillars of the new church,—even he is fallen, and fallen never to rise again. Ah! “it would have been better for that man had he never been born.”—Matt. xxvi. He is now ingulphed in the bottomless abyss, and he will be the reproach of all the damned for a miserable eternity.

Had he been scandalised by witnessing the ignominies which his Master afterwards endured, some excuse, perhaps, might have been brought forward to palliate his guilt. But no: even in the midst of the glorious works of his ministry—such works as no man ever wrought before,—the very moment after he had seen realised the shadow of the paschal Lamb, in the institution of the Christian passover—the very moment after

he had partaken of these truly heavenly *sweetmeats*—*the bread of life*—he went and basely betrayed his Lord and Master.

Oh! how do I tremble at the recollection of the treason of this faithless disciple! Am I more learned in the laws of God than Judas was? Have I been more favoured by God than he was? Have I been raised to a higher dignity in the church than he was? Have I been made partaker of more spiritual blessings than he was? And yet he fell, never to rise again! Alas! I know not one half of what he knew; I have received not one half of what he received: and shall I presume on my own strength? O God! protect my weakness; for how shall I stand, if thou be not my support? How shall I persevere, if thou be not my strength?

Examine what share you have had in the treason of Judas, or, in other words, how often you have betrayed your Lord by wilful sin. Repent of your past crimes; and be resolved never to offend any more, lest you should be forsaken by God, and left to perish in your sins, as Judas was.

## TUESDAY IN PASSION-WEEK.

### ON JESUS IN THE COURT OF THE HIGH PRIEST.

No sooner was Christ betrayed by the base perfidiousness of Judas, than a band of merciless soldiers immediately lay hold of him, dragging him first to Annas, and thence to the palace of Caiphas, where he is received by a bloody assembly of the chief-priests, scribes, and elders, unanimously resolved to make away with the innocent: therefore, “they sought false testimony against Jesus, that they might deliver him up to death.”—Matt. xxvi. Barbarous Jews! do not thus unjustly murder your Messiah. What has he done to deserve this cruelty? He came down from heaven to save your souls. He preached, and wrought miracles, to convert your hardened hearts: and is this the best return you design to make him?

Notwithstanding their endeavours, they could not suborn sufficient witnesses. The High Priest, therefore, conjured him to tell them, if he were the Son of God. He answered: "I am." At this Caiphas rent his garment, saying, "He has blasphemed." They all cried out: "He is guilty of death." Then they spit in his face, mocked him, buffeted, and beat him. Ah Christians! let us not wonder at it. It is what we ourselves have done by our sins, by our rash judgments, detractions, pride, impurities, anger, and sloth.

Although our dearest Saviour met with this cruel usage, yet nothing troubled him more than the fall of Peter. To behold the most zealous of the apostles, who, a little before, had protested that he would rather die than deny his Master, now to deny him, and with an oath too! this did truly afflict him. However, Peter being admonished of his sin, "went forth and wept bitterly." Have we done so at the sight of our sins.

Examine whether you have been so hardened as deliberately to encrease your Saviour's sufferings by your sins. Rely not on your own strength, since two apostles fell: one to rise again, but the other to become an eternal prey to merciless devils.

## WEDNESDAY IN PASSION-WEEK.

### ON THE DENIAL OF PETER.\*

"I LOOKED on my right hand and beheld, and there was no one that would know me."—Ps. cxli. Ah! dear Lord, there was no one that would know thee in the midst of thy sufferings for our redemption! One apostle betrayed thee: others fled from thee: Peter alone remained. He, "willing to see the end," followed thee into the court of the High Priest. But, how deeply must thou have drunk of the cup of humiliation! how degraded, how vilified, how weak must have been thy

outward appearance, that this *great pillar* this *corner stone*, this *rock*, on which the church was to be built; this most favoured of all the disciples, should have been scandalised in thee! and so far scandalised, as to be ashamed of thee, even in the presence of a servant woman! How contemptible must thou have appeared, that even Peter should have been terrified, lest he should be recognised as one of thy friends! that he should have denied thee, and should have affirmed his denial with oaths and curses! Oh! to what a state wert thou reduced for the love of us!

But, what important lessons have we here for our instruction! Peter presumed on the strength of his faith and courage. How dangerous is presumption! Let us not rely on ourselves, but on God alone. The grace of God is our only support. Peter was too curious: he “wished to see the end.” How dangerous it is to pry into the secrets of Providence! Human understanding is too weak to comprehend the ways by which the Almighty is pleased to bring about his designs for the welfare of man. A blind obedience to the ordinances of God, and an unreserved submission to the belief of revealed mysteries, can alone secure our faith. Peter courted danger. How generally is it that the person who courts danger perishes in it. Peter was scandalised at the humiliated state to which his Lord was reduced. How frequently is it that men, who are regular Christians, and have the best of intentions, are scandalised at the eminent servants of God when they are under persecution—when they are calumniated and abused—when they are trodden under foot, and made a parable of reproach? Oh! how many lessons are there presented to us in the fall of Peter! Let us profit by them.

Examine whether you have not, by your repeated crimes, exceeded the guilt of Peter’s denial. Imitate his repentance. One single look from Jesus changed his heart, and “he went out and wept bitterly.” Take care and reject not the secret inspirations of grace. Turn not away from the admonitions of

conscience, for they are looks, which your Jesus is graciously pleased to cast on you.

## THURSDAY IN PASSION-WEEK.

### ON JESUS TREATED AS A MOCK KING.\*

WAS the Lord of Glory treated as a mock king? Was he, who is adored as the King of kings by all the host of heaven, degraded and insulted by the vile inhabitants of the earth? Was he ridiculed with mock salutations and genuflexions by the creatures whom he came to redeem, at the time that he was adored and worshipped by those who needed not redemption? Oh! the humility—the love of our incarnate God! Oh! the blindness—the pride—the ingratitude of perverse man!

But it is not the Jews alone who treat him in this manner; nor is it for the Jews alone that he submits to this indignity. We, as often as we sin, treat him as a mock king. We, as often as we kneel down before him, with hearts obstinately bent on the unlawful gratification of our passions, insult him by our genuflexions. We, as often as we assist at the Holy Sacrifice with the spirit of indevotion and tepidity, are as criminal as those of the Jews were, who beheld their Saviour in the midst of his enemies, and were indifferent to his sufferings. In fact, the Jews knew him not. They considered him as a disturber of the peace, and a seducer of the people; and they treated him as such. Whereas, we know him to be “the light of the Gentiles, and the salvation of his people Israel.”—Luke i.

Oh! why do we not acknowledge him for our true king, by actions as well as by words? Why are we rebellious against him by sin, when we know that our rebellion is against the Almighty? My dear Jesus! thou shalt henceforward be the only king of my heart; and thee only will I adore. I will



walk in thy footsteps: and when the world vilifies me, as it has done thee; when it refuses to acknowledge my title to innocence, to honour, or esteem, I will patiently submit. I will forgive and pray for my enemies. I will seek not myself, but thy honour and glory. I will pay no attention to the praise or censures of men. My only ambition shall be, to be found innocent, or truly repentant in thy sight, and in the sight of all thy heavenly court.

Examine your Saviour in this his degraded state, and see how often you have joined the profane rabble of the Jews, by basely preferring your pleasures or passions before him. Return to him with your whole hearts. He is humbled for you. Be you humbled before him, and your humility shall entitle you to be exalted hereafter.

## FRIDAY IN PASSION-WEEK.

### ON THE SUFFERINGS OF OUR BLESSED LADY DURING THE PASSION OF JESUS.\*

WHO shall describe the sufferings of the Virgin Mother of God, during the passion of her Son? She was blessed above women, by the extraordinary gifts which she received: and we may truly say, that she was the most afflicted among women, by the extraordinary sufferings which she endured. Simeon had forewarned her, that “a sword should pierce her soul.”—Luke, i. These prophetic words were sounding in her ears, during the whole course of the life of her son; and now that he is exposed to all the malice of his enemies, she experiences their fulfilment. *A sword of mortal anguish pierces her soul.*

O ye mothers! whose bosoms glow with love for your offspring, “attend and see if there be sorrow like unto her sorrow,” (Lament. i.) what would be your feelings, were you to hear that your most dearly beloved son was seized by a

band of ruffians, against whom there was no law, and from whose hands there was no release? What would be your agony during the long succeeding night? What, again, would be your feelings in the morning, when you sought your son, and found him in the midst of these his enemies, exposed to every insult, and enduring every torture? What would be your feelings, when you saw him cruelly scourged, crowned with thorns, brought forth to the people, a most ghastly spectacle, presented to them with an *Ecce Homo*—*Behold the Man*, and at length, condemned to be crucified, amidst the acclamations of the multitude? What would be your feelings, when you heard the strokes of the hammer nailing him to the cross; when you saw him hoisted up above the heads of the crowd; when you heard his dying groans, and saw him give up the ghost? We may truly say, that you will never be subjected to such a trial as this. But the mother of Jesus was. And conceive, if you can, the agonising tortures which pierced her soul.

Examine whether you are ready to partake with Mary in the sufferings of her son. Take notice, that she suffers merely on account of his sufferings. She is not enraged against his enemies. She does not upbraid them. She does not say a word against them. In the same manner, when you are exposed to injuries and insults, vent not your rage upon the visible authors of them, but inflict punishment on yourselves, as being, by your sins, the real cause of what you endure.

## SATURDAY IN PASSION-WEEK.

### ON JESUS ARRAIGNED BEFORE PILATE.

EARLY the next morning the council deliver up Jesus to the Roman president, Pontius Pilate. The calumnies of the Jews come in thick upon him; but he answers not a word. Do

you hear, says Pilate, what they object against you? He is silent still. Dear Redcemer! thou couldst not give us a more convincing proof of thy being more than man: falsely accused, and not a word in thy defence! Christians, are we silent under provocations? Do we bear our afflictions with a silent patience?

Though Pilate laboured all he could to acquit Jesus, by declaring his innocence, yet the importunities of the Jews prevailed over him. Die he must, and even upon a cross. "Let him be crucified; let his blood be upon us, and on our children," (Matt. xxvi.) was their universal cry.

Envious Jews! what has Jesus done, to deserve to die? Is he guilty of injustice? Has he committed murder? Has he been seditious, that the notorious Barabbas should be preferred before him? Why do you call on his guiltless blood to fall upon you? Your prayer shall be heard. You shall perish in your infidelity. Your country shall be laid waste; your race destroyed; and the small remnant of you shall become vagabonds on the face of the earth.

However, sentence is pronounced, and Jesus is delivered into their hands. Oh! what insults does he now endure! what taunts! what jeers! clothed, as he is, in the purple garment, and crowned with thorns, what a subject of mockery is his glorious title of "King of the Jews!" Oh! ye angels of heaven, can you behold the Holy of Holies thus abused, and not appear in his defence! Ah! my soul, how often hast thou added to his humiliations, by thy pride and impurities! How often hast thou encouraged his enemies to insult him, by thy scandalous example! How often hast thou buffeted him, by slander and rash judgment! How often hast thou mocked him, by profaning the sacraments! Repent and amend.

Examine yourselves, and if you have been so unhappy as to join with the Jews, in any of their cruelties, sue for pardon by an early repentance. Pray that the blood of Jesus may heal your souls.

## ON ST. JOSEPH.

*March 19.]*—St. Joseph was “a just man.”—Matt. i. His *justice* was general, including all virtues. His *wisdom* must be great, when to him was committed the care of the Son of God. His *purity* must be extraordinary, being chosen a companion for the purest of virgins, and the most innocent of men. We ought to admire his *faith*, in readily believing what the angel told him, that Mary should conceive, and bring forth a son. We ought to honour his *obedience*, in flying, the very night he was admonished, with our Lady and her infant into Egypt, without reasoning upon the difficulties of the voyage, or the strangeness of the country.

What humility must possess his heart, when, although descended of the royal blood of David, he cheerfully submitted to the fatigues of a poor carpenter! What mildness did he show in the management of his blessed family! With what patience did he endure the difficulties he met with through the course of his life? Was not his heart swallowed up in ecstasies of love? Did he not expire in the arms of Jesus and Mary?

Chaste St. Joseph! the most honoured of fathers, the best of spouses, the most just of men, present our petitions to the throne of mercy. Oh! how I am confounded, when I reflect how different my life is from yours! Where is that faith, love, and patience? Where is the obedience, and perfect resignation to the will of God, which inflamed your breast?

Examine yourselves, and zealously labour to imitate the virtues of St. Joseph; it is the most acceptable devotion you can offer to him. Take him for your patron, and protector of purity. Beg of him, that by the care he had of Jesus, he would succour you in distress, and obtain for you a happy death.

## ON THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY.

*March. 29.]*—WHEN Europe, Asia, Africa, and the vast continent of America, knew nothing but idolatry; when vice was so common, as to become authorised by the very gods whom they adored; when men were slaughtered, and sacrificed to devils; when Judea, that little spot of ground, where alone the true God was worshipped, was over-run with hypocrisy, pride, ambition, and all manner of excess, then did the blessed Jesus prepare for our redemption. An angel announces to our humble Lady that she is made choice of to be the mother of God: and she readily submits to the will of Heaven. “Be it done unto me according to thy word.”—Luke, i. Let us learn her pious resignation.

What! a poor virgin to be the mother of God! Can a woman, born in time, bear a God Eternal corporally in her womb! It is a particular grace bestowed on Mary; a privilege not to be granted to another. And how does she demean herself? “Behold the handmaid of the Lord.”—Luke, i.

Let us imitate her humility. Were we but half as humble, chaste, and resigned, as was the blessed Virgin, we should carry Jesus in our hearts. Let us not wonder, that he descended into the womb of a meek virgin, when we see that he daily enters into the breasts of sinners. For, does he not do this, as often as we communicate?

O Virgin Lady, intercede for us to your beloved son: the son can deny nothing to his mother. Show yourself a mother to *us*, for whom Christ died. We desire but a part of those virtues which adorned your son.

Examine yourselves, and be not negligent in your devotions to the blessed Virgin Mary. Choose her for your mother: acknowledge her for your queen: take her for your advocate: honour and love her, because God has done so: morning, noon,

and evening, devoutly salute her with the *Angelical Salutation*; it is a prayer most pleasing to her.

## PALM-SUNDAY.

### ON JESUS SCOURGED AT THE PILLAR.\*

THE enemies of our Lord were not satisfied with calumniating, and insulting over him. They thirsted after his blood. Pilate, yielding to their barbarous desires, and hoping that their rage would be appeased by a part only of his blood, ordered him to be scourged. The order was immediately executed, and Jesus was scourged publicly as a malefactor, before all the people.

Oh! were we to be condemned, without just cause, by a court of justice, to the same punishment, what would be our feelings? What would be our agony, when we were stripped—when we were tied to the pillar—when the executioner was inflicting the lash? Let us meditate on this subject, and endeavour to conceive a just idea of what our Saviour suffered for us in this stage of his passion.

The number of lashes that he received is known only to himself. The Jews never gave so many as forty stripes, as St. Paul testifies of his own scourgings.—2 Cor. xi. But the Roman punishment of scourging, to which our Lord was condemned, was very severe. Fix your eyes on him fastened to the pillar. See with what unalterable peace of mind, and in what silence he endures the lashes. He seems to have abandoned his tender virginal flesh to the will of his enemies. His only solicitude is the salvation of our souls.

With this example before our eyes, shall we pamper this criminal flesh of ours? Shall we hesitate to inflict the scourge on it as it deserves? Shall we be impatient under the slight scourges which we receive from others? Shall we give way to anger when exposed to contradictions and insults; and seek to return evil for evil, instead of endeavouring to overcome

evil with good? Shall we repine when pains of body are inflicted on us by him who has suffered so much in his own body for the love of us?

Examine what are your dispositions to follow your Saviour in this stage of his passion. If you do not take the *discipline*, at least you are required to submit patiently to the trials and sufferings which you cannot avoid. These are sent to you by God himself; and to be impatient under them would be to act in opposition to his will.

## MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

### ON JESUS CROWNED WITH THORNS.\*

“AND plating a crown of thorns, they put it on his head.”  
—Matt. xxvii. Yes: on the head of Jesus they press down a wreath of long, hard, and sharp thorns, as a diadem. Oh! how is the King of Glory treated by the world! Ought we to expect better treatment from this enemy of all that is good? Consider the torture which your Saviour suffers from this crown. The thorns pierce deep on every side, and the blood trickles down his head and face. But why does he submit to this inhuman treatment? Ah! it was to expiate the guilt which we incur by the vain decorations of that part of our mortal frame. It was to humble the pride which we take in what is called beauty of features, and comeliness of person.

He was comely and lovely above the children of men: but what was he when in the hands of the Jewish rabble, crowned with thorns, and his face disfigured with spittle? Ah! notwithstanding these outward defilements, he was, even then, lovely and adorable in the sight of the whole court of heaven. Let us learn from this, not to form our judgment of others from outward appearances; nor to seek to gain the esteem of others by the same fallacious criterion. The just are frequently degraded and vilified by the world, at the time that they are

objects of complacency in the sight of God and of all his heavenly host.

Let us reflect again on the sufferings which Jesus endured in his head from this crown of thorns, during the remainder of his passion. Ah! who shall describe the torture which it gave him during the many hours that he continued to wear it? My soul, shall I henceforward dare to complain, when pains are inflicted on my guilty head? Shall I not rather submit to them with joy? Have I not piety and resolution sufficient to say: "Lord inflict thy judgments tenfold on this head of mine. I ask no other indulgence than that thou give me patience."

Examine the circumstances attending the crowning of your Saviour. Acknowledge him, in that state, to be your king; and pray that you may be crowned like him, with humiliations and thorns in this life, in order that you may be made partaker of his crown of glory in the next.

## TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

ON JESUS PRESENTED TO THE PEOPLE WITH AN "ECCE HOMO,"  
BEHOLD THE MAN.\*

HITHERTO our blessed Saviour has walked before us, suffering and bleeding for our iniquities, without opening his mouth. He now turns upon us, and, standing with his arms tied before him, a reed in his hand, and a crown of thorns on his head, addresses us in the words of Pilate: "Ecce Homo—Behold the Man." Oh! Let us contemplate him in this stage of his sorrows. "Behold the Man," he says. Behold what I have already suffered. Behold the garments of mockery and folly which your sins have thrown over me. Behold my head, crowned with thorns by your pride and ambition. Behold, through these tattered garments, the innumerable wounds which your love of sensual pleasures and shameful lusts have inflicted on my body. Behold how I am forsaken by all man-



kind, and by the whole world itself, in order to expiate the guilt which you have incurred by your inordinate love of creatures and of worldly things. Behold how I submit to calumnies and slanders, on account of the defamations and detractions with which you assail your fellow-creatures. Behold how I have forsaken the ways of bodily comfort and ease, and have embraced the severest sufferings, on purpose to encourage you to embrace cheerfully the rigours of penance, and to walk in my footsteps. My dear children, *Behold the Man!* Behold, to what a state I, your Lord and your God, have debased myself, in my humanity, for the love of you.

Oh! what a spectacle is this! can we fix our eyes upon him, and hear his words, and feel no detestation for our past sins? Can we be so far hardened in our evil ways, as to require that he should suffer still more, and that the work of iniquity should be completed before we make up our minds to relinquish the ways of sin? Let us rather say: "Lord, it is enough. Thou hast already endured sufficient for my sake. I am sorry for my sins, and I am resolved not to offend thee any more."

Examine your Saviour in the midst of these his sufferings. As he presents himself before you, do you present yourself before him, and say, on your part: "Lord, *behold the man.* Behold my infirmities, and strengthen my weakness. It is my sincere desire not to offend thee again: but, without thy special grace, my resolutions will be ineffectual. Behold this miserable sinner, and come to his relief."

## WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

### ON JESUS CARRYING HIS CROSS.\*

OUR Blessed Lord proceeds in the great work of our redemption. He suffers the malice of his enemies to prevail, and he bows down, with submission, to the sentence of death which is passed upon him. The cross, on which he is to

suffer, is laid on his shoulders, and, as well as his strength will permit, he begins his last sad journey. Oh! let us follow him. Every step is exquisitely painful. Overpowered and spent as he is, how is he to advance? Ah! he considers not his weakness of body: he readily receives the cross on his shoulders, and in silence totters on under the weighty burden.

He is pleased to lay crosses on our shoulders; let us receive them willingly and cheerfully. Our crosses will not be above our strength: let us not complain, or murmur under them. Our crosses will not be the instruments of our death; let us then consider them light and easy, when compared with the cross of our Saviour. Our crosses are not laid on shoulders that are innocent and undefiled: let us then consider them as our due.

Our Lord sinks under the weighty burden: his strength is gone: he falls. Oh! let us run to his assistance. Let us ease him of a part of his load. Our sins are fastened to the cross; and this is the load that weighs him down. Let us repent of all our past sins; and let us be resolved never to commit them any more. My Jesus! bitterly do I lament that my sins have added to thy sufferings.

Simon of Cyrene is constrained to take up the cross, and to carry it after Jesus. Oh! let us envy the pious office, which this good man is called upon to perform. Let us endeavour, in the same manner, to carry the cross after him. By suffering with Jesus, we may be said, even now, to be relieving him, and easing him of part of his load.

Examine how you repent of your sins, and how you carry the crosses that are laid on you. Consider your deserts, and learn to endure. "Crosses you must carry. If you carry them willingly, they will carry you."—*Foll. of Chr.* Be patient under them. Carry them in silence after Jesus, and they will be your happiness both here and hereafter.

## MAUNDAY-THURSDAY.

## ON JESUS NAILED TO THE CROSS.\*

JESUS is come to Mount Calvary. The Lamb is arrived at the place of sacrifice. Let us attend at this awful spectacle. The cross is placed flat on the ground. Jesus, in silence, suffers himself to be stripped of his clothes, and submissively lays himself on his back on this hard bed. In the midst of these preparations, his eyes are fixed on heaven. With love for us, and even for his bloody executioners, his heart is bleeding more profusely than any of the external wounds he has received. He stretches out his hands to be nailed. Oh! listen to the strokes of the hammer. The nails are driven through his hands and feet, and fastened deep into the hard wood of the cross. Who shall conceive the extremity of torture which our dear Lord endures? Behold him now, surrounded by his bloody executioners: his body naked, and fastened to this hard bed: his friends fled, and not an individual of the human race at hand, to administer to him the least relief.

Oh! what have our sins cost the innocent Lamb of God! He is stripped of his clothes, to expiate the sins occasioned by indecency of dress, and by the wilful exposure of nakedness: and shall we still continue to show forth this filthy, this criminal body of ours, as a temptation to the lustful eyes of others? He humbles himself, and places his body straight upon the cross: and shall we refuse to humble ourselves to the will of superiors, were even tortures and death to be the consequence? He suffers his tender body to be nailed to the cross: and shall we refuse to suffer our flesh to be crucified, at least, as to its vices and concupiscences? Oh! the cross is the only fit place for this criminal body of ours: and shall we suffer his innocent body to be nailed to it, and screen the only victim which is deserving of it?

Examine how near you approach to the cross of Christ. It is not required that your body be actually nailed to the cross: but see how far you crucify your flesh by the rigours of penance, and by refusing every indulgence which is inconsistent with the spirit of penance. To this cross your flesh must be fastened, or you will never be with Jesus in Paradise.

## GOOD-FRIDAY MORNING.

### ON JESUS ON MOUNT CALVARY.

O CHRISTIANS! what is the object that is presented before us on this day! Our Lord and our God in the last act of that sacred and awful tragedy, which he is performing for the redemption of mankind. Oh! what a spectacle! The great Emmanuel-God with us—the Holy One of Israel—the King of kings and Lord of lords, suffering excruciating tortures, and hanging on a cross, to which he has been condemned, and nailed by the unanimous consent of his own chosen people! Listen to his moans: “at least you, my friends, take pity on me.”—Job xix. Behold how my wounded body hangs naked on a cross for your sins: see, how “they have dug my hands and feet, and numbered my bones,” (Ps. xxi.): but no one regards him.

Wretched Jews! where is your humanity? Your Redeemer cries out in a lamentable manner, and will no one pity him? He is thirsty; and is gall a fit cordial for a dying man? With his expiring breath he prays for you, and will you thank him by a discharge of blasphemies? But he faints apace—his limbs grow pale, and, hanging down his head, he dies. Christians, he died for us, and for those very Jews who put him to death. But to see his blood let out with the blood of common victims; to see it mixed with the dust of Mount Calvary; who can think of it without indignation? Were not the angels astonished at it? Did not the rocks split, and was

not the veil of the temple rent asunder? Did not the ground open, and the sun grow pale? Was not all nature sorrowful?

Examine yourselves, and detest all sin: how heinous must it be, when nothing but the blood of a God could cancel it! Practise, likewise, the virtues which your Saviour in his passion recommends to you. Imitate his tears in the Garden of Gethsemani: imitate his meekness in the court of Caiphas: imitate his silence when brought before Pilate: learn his patience at the pillar, and his love on the cross.

## GOOD-FRIDAY AFTERNOON.

### ON THE DEATH OF CHRIST.\*

HASTEN to the cross, and behold the immaculate Lamb of God on the point of completing his sacrifice. Oh! ye heavens be astonished. Your Lord and your King is ready to give up the ghost! Oh! ye inhabitants of the earth, be filled with dismay: your sins have crucified the Son of God! Hasten to the cross. You, indeed, have not nailed him to it with your own hands; but, hasten to the cross, and hear reproofs from his mouth which are as applicable to you, as they were to the faithless Jews. "My people, what have I done to you? or in what have I grieved you? What more could I do for you, which I have not done? I have brought you out of Egypt: I have delivered you out of bondage: and you have delivered me over to my enemies. I have opened the sea before you: I have guarded you safe through all tribulations; and you have pierced my side with a spear. I have fed you with manna in the desert, even with the sacrament of my own body and blood; and you, by your sins, have beaten me with buffets and scourges. I have prepared for you a crown of immortal glory: and you have crowned me with thorns. I have exalted you to the dignity of children of God: and you have hanged me to the gibbet of the cross."—*Improper. Div. Offic.*

Oh! who can hear these reproaches! And yet, how few are there to whom they are not applicable! Oh! my suffering Jesus! look upon me, as thou lookedst upon the good thief, and listen to my repentant sighs. I am resolved never to crucify thee again by wilful sin.

Examine whether or not this is your disposition. Reflect, that although your Saviour is now humbled, he will be quickly exalted; and that, if you do not repent of your sins, now in this your day, he will speedily come and appear before you as your judge. Then these reproofs will be brought against you as accusations of the blackest ingratitude; and an eternal separation from all that is good will be allotted to you as the just reward of your sins.

## HOLY-SATURDAY.

### ON JESUS IN THE GRAVE.

AFTER our Lord was dead, his sacred body was taken down from the cross by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus; who, having embalmed it, and wrapped it up in a clean winding-sheet, laid it in a new sepulchre, "in which no body had, as yet, been laid."—Luke xxiii. What an affliction must it be to our blessed Lady and the rest of the disciples, to lose the sight of their dearest Jesus! Do we now embalm our Saviour's body with the spices and perfumes of holy prayer? Have we wrapt it in the sheet of virtues, and laid it in the tomb of a purified heart? It is our duty to do so.

Weep, my soul, at the door of the monument; bewail there the death of thy Saviour, and the anguish of Mary. Call to mind all that has happened, from the garden of Gethsemani to the sepulchre; and then be surprised at the malice of the Jews, the enormity of sin, and the overflowing love of thy Lord and Saviour.

Our blessed Redeemer is full of charity. Whilst his body

is in the grave, his soul descends into Limbo, to comfort the pious fathers there, and to assure them that the time of their deliverance is at hand. We cannot conceive the joy which must have filled the hearts of those pious souls at the sight of their Lord. They long expected the happy time of their redemption, and now it is come. Christians, let us join with them in blessing our Redeemer; let us beseech him to remember us, the still banished children of Eve, wailing and weeping in this vale of tears. "Free, O Lord, my soul from the lion's mouth:" (Ps. xxi.) let not my enemies prevail over me.

Examine yourselves, and let not a day pass without spiritually watching at the sepulchre of Christ, by a serious meditation on his death and passion. Let every action of your life express your gratitude for the infinite mercies he has bestowed upon you. Say, with the fathers in Limbo: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; because, O God, thou hast redeemed us in thy blood."—Apoc. iv.

## EASTER-DAY.

### ON THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD.

CHRIST is risen: he has conquered death: he has broken down the gates of hell: he triumphs over the devil and the bloody Jews. "Woman, why weepest thou?" Thy tears are now unseasonable: our Lord can die no more, unless it be within our hearts. Rejoice, my soul: join with the church in her repeated alleluias; for "this is the day which the Lord hath made."—Ps. cxvii. Nothing could more firmly establish our faith in the divinity than the resurrection of our Saviour: nor could any thing more powerfully raise our hope: "If the head be risen, will not the members rise also."—*St. Gregory.*

Christ is risen: is he risen in our hearts? Has he dethroned the devil there? Does he reign in us by grace? Have we,

by patience, humility, love, and other Christian virtues, prepared an abode for him? Happy we, could we truly say it.

It will avail us nothing to celebrate Christ's resurrection in outward show, unless we interiorly rise with him. This must be, by dying to sin, and to the occasions of it; by dying to our passions and to all evil inclinations; by dying to sloth and all remissness in the way of virtue. "Christ, rising from the dead, dieth now no more."—Rom. vi. Have we risen in this manner? Have we not rather, by relapses, proved perfidious to our promises? Good God! deliver us from so great a misfortune. Since thou hast died for us, let not thy blood rise up in judgment against us.

Examine yourselves, and resolve, at this time, to rise effectually with your dearest Lord. "Purge away the old leaven."—1 Cor. v. "Put off the old man, and put on the new."—Eph. iv. If you die with Christ, you will certainly rise with him.

## EASTER-MONDAY.

ON JESUS APPEARING TO MARY MAGDALEN.\*

DID not the most dutiful of the sons of men appear to his blessed mother, and make known to her the glories of his resurrection, before he appeared to any other of his disciples? We may reasonably suppose that he did: otherwise, why is she not the first to bring ointments to embalm his body, at the dawn of light, on the first day of the week? She attended at the foot of the cross; heard his last sighs; saw him give up the ghost; and witnessed his being laid in the sepulchre. Why, therefore, was she not the first at his tomb, after the expiration of the Sabbath? Her strength was not exhausted, because her faith was not weakened by the humiliations of his passion. Her love was not diminished, because she knew him to be her Lord and her God. The reason could be no other, than that she knew he was not among the dead. The fact of



his appearing to her is not recorded by the Evangelists; and the omission is intended to humble the pride of those who seem to expect that every action of theirs is to be noticed, and that every favour received by them from heaven ought to be known by men.

But to whom is he said to have appeared first? To one who had been a notorious sinner—to Mary Magdalen. She loved much; and, on that account, many sins had been forgiven her. She attended early in the morning. Her love was her weight. She hastened to the sepulchre, expecting that he was still among the dead. Ah! the positive declaration of her Lord that he would rise again, and the resurrection of her brother, Lazarus, ought to have enlightened her mind: but all these considerations were absorbed by the grief she felt for the loss of her beloved. “Where is he whom my soul loveth?” alone engrossed her thoughts. To her, therefore, on account of the excess of her love, our Lord manifested himself, and sent her, an apostle, to the apostles themselves.

Oh! what lessons have we in the examples of these two Maries! In the first, what inducements have we to conceal the interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, and to lead a life, hidden with Christ in God. In the second, what encouragements have we to repentance, seeing that the choicest favours of heaven are granted to the truly penitent, as well as to the innocent; and more bountifully to the penitent who sincerely loves, than to the innocent whose love is less ardent, and less sincere.

Examine what is your love for Jesus. If you receive particular favours, seek not that the world should know it. If you have been a notorious sinner, do not despond. Look at the favours that Magdalen received, and be assured that if you love much, much, likewise, will be given to you.

## EASTER-TUESDAY.

ON JESUS APPEARING TO PETER.\*

“THE Lord hath risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.” —Luke, xxiv. How effectual are the tears of sincere repentance! Three days ago, Peter swore and cursed that he knew not the man. Nevertheless, to him our Lord appears, before he granted that favour to any of his other apostles. Even the chaste, the faithful St. John, who attended him to his last breath on the cross, is not preferred before him. Oh! why is Peter thus honoured so soon after his fall? Why was not Judas favoured in the same manner? Judas repented of his sin, declaring that he had *betrayed innocent blood*: and of Peter’s repentance nothing more is said, than that he *went out and wept bitterly*. Why then is such favour shown to Peter? Ah! Judas sinned through the perversity of his own heart. He betrayed his Lord even in the midst of his glorious works, he betrayed him for the base love of money, and his repentance was nothing better than despair. Peter saw him in the midst of his humiliations; and, because he relied too much on his own strength, he was permitted to experience the reality of his own weakness, that thereby every disciple might learn to distrust in himself, and to place his whole confidence in God. Peter *wept bitterly*; and his tears were accepted, because they proceeded from a truly *contrite and humble heart*.

But, why was Peter preferred before the other apostles? Because he was the rock on which the church was to be built; and, because to him was committed the charge of supporting the faith of his brethren: “Thou being converted, confirm thy brethren.”—Luke, xxii. Ah! how wonderful are the ways of God! What an encouraging lesson to repentance in the example of Peter! How clearly are the motives marked out, on which our repentance is to be grounded! To

detest sin merely on account of its turpitude, or because the mind is tortured with remorse, like Judas, is not the *virtue* of repentance. We must repent, like Peter, through motives of love. We must repent, because we have denied the Lord of Glory, because we have offended our God. These motives will cause our repentance to be accepted: and were our sins as red as scarlet, they would cause them to be made as white as snow.

Examine whether you have imitated Peter in his repentance. Like him, you have denied your Lord by your sins. Repent like him, and you will be found worthy of the choicest favours of heaven.

### EASTER-WEDNESDAY.

ON JESUS APPEARING TO THE TWO DISCIPLES GOING TO  
EMMAUS.—*Luke*, xxiv.\*

NOTWITHSTANDING all the wonderful works which our Lord had performed; notwithstanding the clear manner in which he had foretold the principal circumstances of his passion and death, and of his resurrection on the third day, his disciples seem to have lost their faith in him as being the Messiah. They saw him numbered among the dead, and lying in the sepulchre; and they concluded that the magnificent hopes which they had formed, of his future kingdom, were vanished for ever. Still, however, they loved him. He was the constant subject of their thoughts and conversation: and they imagined that the cause of their sorrows was known to every one. We witness this, in the two disciples going to Emmaus. "We supposed," said they to our Lord, who had associated himself to them in disguise, "We supposed that it was he who was to have redeemed Israel: for he was a prophet mighty in word and work: and art thou the only stranger in Jerusalem, who knowest not these things?"—*Luke*, xxiv.

How seldom is this sincere love to be witnessed in these times! We know *that Christ was to suffer, and so to enter into his glory*; the Scriptures concerning him have been opened to us by the voice of his ministers; he frequently manifests himself to us *in the breaking of bread*: and yet, how few are there, whose hearts are burning within them with the holy flames of gratitude and love! How few, who may be said truly to know him, and to believe in him! Ah! if such be our conduct, notwithstanding all the spiritual knowledge that has been imparted to us, in what manner should we have behaved, had we witnessed the humiliations and sorrows of our Lord in his passion and death? We should probably have acted a baser part than even Judas himself.

Examine whether you live up to the knowledge which you have acquired. You acknowledge and believe that it was Jesus who was to redeem Israel, that his spiritual kingdom is established, and that you are a member of it. Do you testify your gratitude in a proper manner? Is Jesus truly the king of your heart, and the chief object of your love?

## EASTER-THURSDAY.

ON THE BENEFITS OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.\*

“THE Lord is risen indeed.”—Luke, xxiv. Oh! what encouraging words! *He is risen indeed*: death, therefore, is not the termination of all our prospects. He is risen, “the first fruits of the dead,” (1 Cor. xv.) therefore, we shall rise again, the *second* fruits, or fruits purchased by him. “O death! where is thy sting?”—1 Cor. xv. What is there terrible in death, when it is discovered to be nothing else than a termination of all the evils, and dangers, and afflictions of this miserable life; and when it is known that, at the moment it separates the soul from the body, it opens the gates of another world, where prospects of an immeasurable expanse are unfolded to its view.

When the world was sitting in darkness, and in the shades of death, then the close of mortal life was terrific, because nothing beyond the grave was known to mortal man. But the resurrection of Jesus has disarmed death of its terrors: it has made known to us what death truly is, namely, a separation of the soul and body for a time only. It has given proof that the soul still continues to exist, and to retain its consciousness of existence: and that it will be again united to the body, when the appointed time for the general resurrection shall arrive. Oh! truly may we say: *Death, where is thy sting?*

But, although the resurrection of Jesus takes away the sting of death, it does not take away the sting of sin. Sin is as terrible now as it ever was. In fact, sin may be called the sting of death: for, what prospect beyond the grave is there to souls defiled with sin? To them, all is darkness and melancholy. The pool of fire and brimstone is the only object that meets their eye. Death is the closing term of all the enjoyments upon which their hearts are fixed. To be free, therefore, from the sting of death, we must labour strenuously to destroy in our souls the sting of sin.

Examine whether the resurrection of Jesus has divested death of its terrors, as far as regards you individually. If not, examine whether it is because you have not repented of your sins, or because you feel a certain *fear and trembling*, on account of the uncertainty whether you are worthy of love or hatred. If the latter, then all is well. Death may terrify you: but its sting is removed.

## EASTER-FRIDAY.

ON THE LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE RESURRECTION OF  
JESUS.\*

“CHRIST was to suffer, and so to enter into his glory.”—Luke, xxiv. Why was Christ to suffer, in order to enter into his

glory? Did he stand in need of redemption? He was innocence itself. He was the "beloved Son of the Father, in whom he was always well pleased."—Matt. xvii. He was the "green wood," (Luke, xxiii.) an unfit substance to be set on fire by the breath of an angry God. Why then did he suffer, in order to enter into his glory? It was for us: it was that we might be prepared, by his sufferings, to enter into the glory which was intended for us. "He suffered, leaving you an example that you should walk in his footsteps," (1 Pet. xii.) and that "by suffering with him, you should reign with him."—2 Tim. ii.

Oh! let us testify our gratitude for this his infinite mercy and love. Let us look up to him as our model. Let us follow him in all his painful ways, for he is truly "the way, the truth, and the life."—John xiv. Are we calumniated and scoffed at, and abused, and made a subject of ridicule to others? Let us endure it patiently, for he endured the same. Are we betrayed by false brethren? Let us possess our soul in peace, and endeavour to overcome evil with good, for he did the same. Are we labouring under distresses of mind? Let us remember his agony in the garden. Are we suffering losses, either of property or character? Let us look up to him in his passion, for he was stripped of his very clothes, and treated as a *seducer*. Are our sufferings the agonies of repentance, and the pains of self-denial? Oh! these are sufferings which we ought to labour to encrease. All that Jesus endured, he endured for our sins: and are we, sinners, to complain of the rigours of mortification and penance? We must, of necessity, endure many things from our fellow-creatures; we must endure many pains of body and mind; and we must impose many voluntary acts of penance on ourselves, or we shall not be walking in the footsteps of our suffering Jesus. Oh! let us then learn to suffer with Christ, that we may be found worthy to reign with him.

Examine what are your sufferings, both voluntary and

involuntary, and what is your patience under them. If Christ "was to suffer, and so to enter into his glory," how much more necessary it is that you should suffer before you can enter into your glory.

## EASTER-SATURDAY.

### ON RISING AGAIN WITH JESUS.\*

CHRIST is risen from the dead, glorious and immortal. Shall we continue on in the death of sin? Christ is "risen for our justification," (Rom. iv.): shall we refuse to be justified, and prefer wallowing in the mire of sensual enjoyments? Oh! what will the husks of swine profit us? Let us arise without delay. The delights of our father's house are already prepared for us.

Did we but feelingly know what the things are, which are for our peace, how eagerly should we throw away these garments of pride and self-love—these appurtenances of death! how readily should we take off our affections from the things of this world—from all that is mortal! how gladly should we soar above all that is earthly, and seek to fix our tabernacle in that place of rest, which our Lord and our God has purchased for our inheritance.

O my soul! what is there in this land of misery, that can satisfy thy desires? Pamper this body as much as thou wilt, gratify all its cravings, indulge, to the utmost of thy power, the "concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life," (1 John, ii.), and what will it all profit thee? Thou wilt find that all is vanity and affliction of spirit. Turn away, then, from these follies. Die to the world and the flesh. Rise, with thy Saviour, to a life of pure pleasures—to a life of penitence and purity—to a life of holiness and justice. Thou hast given sufficient of thy life to vanity. Give the remainder to thy God. Rise, and thou shalt be

justified. Rise, and thou shalt be prepared to enjoy, with thy Redeemer, a life glorious and immortal.

Examine whether you still remain in the death<sup>o</sup>f sin, or whether you be truly risen with Christ. If you have reason to hope that you are truly risen, oh! continue, during the remainder of your life, to “seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God: mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth.” And be assured, that, “when Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with him in glory.”—1 Colos. iii.

## LOW-SUNDAY.

### ON THE PASCHAL COMMUNION.\*

THE Jews eat the Paschal Lamb at this season: we eat the flesh of the true “Lamb, who came to take away the sins of the world.”—John, i. The Jews enjoyed only the shadow: we are made partakers of the substance. The Jews considered it as a commemoration of a temporal blessing—the deliverance of their forefathers out of Egypt: we receive it as a pledge of our redemption from sin and hell. The Jews considered it as an observance to which no particular spiritual blessings were attached: we receive it as a most holy sacrament, which confers the most invaluable blessings on the worthy receiver. Oh! how far does the Christian Pasch excel the Passover of the Jews!

My soul! thou hast been made partaker of this Christian Pasch, thou hast eaten the immaculate Lamb, thou hast received from the hand of God all the pledges of thy redemption from the slavery of sin and hell. Has there been nothing wanting on thy part? If thou canst reply satisfactorily to this question, all is well. Thy redemption is complete. Persevere to the end, and the possession of all good things will be thy eternal inheritance.



But alas! can we flatter ourselves that we have done all that we ought to have done? We cannot: and it is expedient that we should not. For were we certain that we had done all that was required of us, where would be that "fear and trembling," with which every Christian ought to work out his salvation? Ah! we should present ourselves before the throne of mercy, with the presumption of the Pharisee, and not with the humility of the publican. We should demand justice, instead of craving for mercy.

Examine what were the dispositions with which you received the Christian Passover. If they were dispositions of sincere humility, love, and repentance, you may reasonably hope that it will be for your salvation. But, on this subject, form your judgment, not from the number of prayers that you have said, but from your hatred of sin, and your proficiency in virtue.

#### ON ST. GEORGE.

*April, 23.]*—St. George was born in Cappadocia, a province of the Lesser Asia. He was from his infancy a Christian: He was of noble blood, a commander in the Emperor Dioclesian's army, and, by the same Dioclesian, beheaded at Rome for his faith, after he had, with undaunted bravery, confessed the faith of Jesus Christ. His courage in battle, and his constancy in suffering, were the motives which caused our forefathers to choose him for the glorious patron of this kingdom.

St. George was a soldier. We are soldiers of Jesus Christ; and do we fight his battles with the resolution and courage of this great saint? Alas! how can we pretend to it, when we so soon give way to the temptations of pride, vain-glory, lust, and revenge; and, on every trifling occasion, take part with the world? Is this an imitation of the brave St. George? It is true, we may call him the patron of our country, but not of our hearts. How do we imitate his constancy in suffering, when we are ever bending under the least affliction,—when

we grumble at Providence upon every disappointment, and criminally complain that we are too hardly dealt with? Alas! can we suffer in this world what our sins have deserved? Are our racks to be compared with those which St. George endured? It is through many temptations, and not by the way of roses, that we are to go to heaven.

Blessed St. George, put up your prayers for us, that, sharing in your courage, constancy, and resolution, neither the fear of what the world will say, nor its pernicious example, nor any artifices of the devil, may ever shake our faith. We cannot want for encouragement, when we have you for our captain. Thus, by conquering our enemies, we may justly call you the patron of our country.

Examine yourselves, and pray for the virtues which the example of this great saint recommends to you. Beseech him to pray for your unhappy country: which, being heretofore a kingdom of saints, now groans under the heavy weight of sin and error.

#### ON ST. MARK.\*

*April 25.*]—St. Mark was one of the disciples of our Lord. He heard his word—he witnessed his works—he was a faithful servant. The soil of his soul was a good soil: and the seed, which fell upon it, grew up, and produced fruit a hundred-fold. Oh! that our souls were like his, and that they brought forth fruit in like manner.

St. Mark shone with so much lustre in the house of God, that the chief of the apostles honoured him with his particular confidence. How ready are the zealous pastors to distinguish true merit, and to sanction it by their authority, for the good of souls, and for promoting the honour and glory of God! And how much alarmed ought we to be when we incur the censures of the church, or when we have not humility sufficient to submit to the authority of our pastor.

St. Mark was an evangelist, and his gospel was approved, and recommended by St. Peter. How carefully must he have laid up the works of our Lord in his heart! and how faithfully must he have narrated them! Oh! that we were as attentive, on all occasions, to the word of God, and that we adhered to truth with the same fidelity!

St. Mark zealously preached the gospel, and founded a church at Alexandria, in Egypt, which became one of the most flourishing portions of the Church of Christ, and which, in after times, was next in rank and dignity to the churches founded by St. Peter himself. Oh! how great must have been the piety and learning of this eminent disciple!

The festival of St. Mark is observed as a day of penance and supplication, and the litanies are appointed to be sung in solemn procession. This point of discipline took its rise, not from any circumstance in the life or history of St. Mark, nor on account of his festival occurring on this day, but, on account of its being a season of the year when a day ought to be set apart for public supplication and penance. In ancient times, the day varied.

Examine yourselves, and see how immense is the difference between your virtues and the virtues of St. Mark—between your piety and zeal and that of St. Mark. Be resolved to amend your lives, and take advantage of the abstinence enjoined on this day, to do penance for your past neglects, and to excite yourselves to greater diligence for the future.

#### ON SS. PHILIP AND JAMES.

*May 1.]* SAINTS Philip and James were both Apostles of Jesus Christ. They were called by him; and, without delay, they left all and followed him. We are all called by a singular mercy to the Christian faith; and do we answer the call? It is not required that we leave out lawful occupations in the world: but do we forsake sin, and the occasions of it?

Do we withdraw our hearts from an immoderate love of creatures, and fix them on Jesus? This we must do to copy out the example of these two apostles.

St. Philip no sooner became a follower of Christ, than he imparted his happiness to his friend Nathaniel: he informed him of the Messiah, and effectually encouraged him to become his disciple. Are we as ready by word and example to implant the gospel in our neighbour's soul? We have, daily, opportunities offered of practising this duty. What did not St. Philip do? He converted great part of barbarous Scythia to the faith of Christ. His zeal abated not, till a cross, like his master's, put an end to his labours, crowning him with martyrdom. Ah! that we were half so zealous.

St. James the Less, surnamed the Just, from his very infancy led so exemplary a life, that he deservedly gained the esteem of all: so great was his sanctity, that he alone was admitted into the sanctuary of the temple. Do we, like St. James, edify our neighbour by good example? We are bound to do so. This apostle always abstained from flesh, wine, and strong drink: he was so addicted to prayer, that his knees were as hard as a camel's hide. At length, for too freely preaching the gospel, he was thrown down from a pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem, and, being yet alive, and praying for his enemies, the Jews, he had his brains dashed out by a fuller's club. Can we say that we practice the self-denials of this saint, when we are ever gratifying ourselves in diet, apparel, and almost every pleasure? Do we pray like him, when half an hour a day is oftentimes too tedious? or when our prayers are accompanied with voluntary distractions?

Examine yourselves, and see how comformable your lives have been to these patterns, St. Philip and St. James. Be careful to imitate them.

## ON THE FINDING OF THE CROSS.

*May 3.]*—THE finding of the holy cross is a festival instituted by the church, in memory of that day, whereon St. Helen, mother of Constantine the Great, found the cross of Christ, after it had lain buried nearly three hundred years by the heathens, who erected a statue of Venus in the place of it.

O God, I give thee thanks for this miraculous discovery of the holy cross. I beg that I may partake of thy infinite merits, who didst die upon it. Grant that I may effectually find thy cross in my soul, by dying to all sin, and by practising those virtues which thou hast taught me from it. I am resolved not to imitate the impiety of infidels, by establishing in my heart the love of the world and its sinful pleasures: Venus, Bacchus, or Adonis shall have no place there. O good cross! a long time sought after, and ardently desired, admit me to thy embraces, and conduct me to my Lord, who, dying on thee, purchased my redemption.

Christians, is the cross of Christ planted in our hearts? Is the humility of the cross there? Is the patience of the cross there? Is the charity, resignation, and self-denial of the cross there? We cannot say it while we are slaves to pride, ambition, revenge, resentments, fretfulness, and a luxurious life. Let us reform our lives. Let us, by detestation of sin and the world, and by bringing ourselves to the holy dispositions of Christ crucified, endeavour to fix his cross in our hearts.

Examine yourselves, and labour this day to find out, and to take up the cross of Christ. Be not afraid of it, but glory in it. There is no other way of entering heaven, but by that of the cross. You have offended God, and your crosses must make satisfaction. It is the cross that must save you.

## MONDAY AFTER LOW-SUNDAY.

## ON SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

HUMILITY is the ground of virtue, and the *knowledge of ourselves* the foundation of humility. We cannot know ourselves, without beholding our *origin*; namely, that we were created out of nothing, conceived in sin, and came naked and weeping into the world. We cannot know ourselves, without beholding our present condition; namely, that we have a depraved heart, and are subject to a thousand weaknesses and imperfections. We cannot know ourselves, but we must know, at the same time, our total dependence on the divine goodness—that we are unable, of ourselves, to have a thought of heaven—and that, if we are visited with chastisements from above, they are not a shadow of what our sins have deserved. Is not, therefore, the knowledge of ourselves the ground of virtue? Let me be well skilled in the affairs of the world; let me know how to aggrandize myself, and enjoy the sweetest pleasures the earth affords; let me conceive the highest mysteries of faith, and all the secrets of nature; it will avail nothing, if I am ignorant of my own heart. “I shall be like him that builds without a foundation, preparing a ruin rather than an edifice.”—*St. Bernard.*

We are all sick, our souls are sick to death; and why do we not study the cause of our distemper, in order to apply a remedy? Why do we not watch the motions of our hearts, and observe from what source our passions flow? How comes it that our inclinations are still untamed, and that, notwithstanding our best resolutions, we are as subject as ever to sinful failings? It is for want of studying the “science of the saints, the knowledge of ourselves.” Let us, then, pray with David: “My God, illuminate the darkness of my soul.”—Ps. xvii. Let us pray, with St. Augustine: “O Lord, let me know myself and thee.”

Examine yourselves, and let not pride, self-love, or sloth, with all their artifices, lead you away from the knowledge of yourselves. It is a necessary study, and daily meditation is the best help to it. Take but that care in reflecting on yourself, as you naturally do in observing your neighbour, and your work is done.

## TUESDAY AFTER LOW-SUNDAY.

### ON THE PROMISES MADE IN BAPTISM.

WHAT are these promises ! “Do you renounce the devil and all his works?” “I do renounce them.” “And all his pomps?” “I do renounce them.” These are solemn and repeated renunciations, made by every Christian at the foot of the altar, and in the sight of heaven and earth: God and his holy angels were witnesses to it. Have we not been perfidious to these sacred vows? I fear our guilty consciences will rise in judgment against us.

The name *perfidious* is the most ignominious reproach that can be fixed on a person: nature itself abhors the character: there is no man of worth who would not willingly sacrifice estate, family, life, and all that is dear to him, rather than lay under the infamous character of a *perfidious* wretch. If, then, it be so black a crime between man and man, what must it be between God and man—between boundless majesty and a creeping worm—and in a matter of the highest concern? Let us, therefore, reflect that, by every mortal sin, we stand guilty of an unparalleled perfidiousness, in breaking the solemn vows made in baptism; and that we renounce God to serve the devil. Blessed Lord! preserve us from this base perfidiousness. May our baptismal renunciation be ever before our eyes, that so we may never dare to violate those sacred vows we made to thee.

In baptism we were clothed with a white garment; the

minister of Christ gave it with these words: "Receive this white garment, and carry it unspotted before the judgment seat of God."—*Rit. Rom.* Have we kept it without spot? Have we not defiled, by pride, impurity, rash judgment, or detraction, this robe of innocence? Have we not stained it by violating the commands of God or his church?

Examine yourselves, and dread a violation of your baptismal promises: it would be a perfidious treachery, and of the highest nature. If you are guilty of it, seek a reconciliation by an early repentance. Propose to your thoughts your future judgment; and remember, that the *white garment* you received, the *sacred vows* you made, the *priest* that baptized you, your *own consciences*, the *angels* who were witnesses, will demand vengeance against you for all abuses committed against the grace of baptism.

## WEDNESDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

### ON THE AFFAIR OF SALVATION.

"God has created us without our concurrence, but he will not save us without our concurrence."—*St. Aug.* Our souls are our own; and it is our own business to save them. A person may have a suit at law, and obtain his cause by means of his advocate; a prince may become victorious by the valour of his armies: but it is not so in the affair of salvation. We shall all be arraigned before an Almighty Judge; and we must all plead our own cause. Are we prepared for it? We have the world and devils, mighty enemies, to engage with, and we must fight our own battles. Are we able to do it?

What should we think of the man who, being active in soliciting for a friend, although in a matter of little consequence, lets his own cause carelessly fall, at the same time, upon the success whereof life and fortune entirely depend? And is it not surprising that this should be the general case of



mankind? How many solicitously provide for this foolish world, to the prejudice of their souls? How many eagerly strive to flatter their carcasses at the expense of their souls! How many lose their time in vain amusements, when they ought to be working out their salvation in fear and trembling! Alas! did we take but one quarter of the pains that the farmer takes in cultivating his lands, the merchant in purchasing a little dust, the courtier in gaining the good will of his prince, or the gentleman in order to support his family, we should all be saints.

Were a damned soul permitted to return to life, what would it not undergo to save itself? Would it grumble at Providence, because it was afflicted? Or, rather, would it not resignedly rejoice in its sufferings, and make them the instruments of its future glory? Would it think prayer tedious, penance unnecessary? Would it, a second time, follow the suggestions of a corrupt world, and neglect its eternity? No, certainly.

Examine yourselves, and let it be your concern to save your souls. You were created for this end. It is your *one thing necessary*, without which you are lost, and lost for ever.

## THURSDAY AFTER LOW-SUNDAY.

### ON OUR GREATEST AFFAIR.

THE salvation of our souls is our *greatest affair*. The overthrowing an enemy, the purchasing an estate, the management of a kingdom, are matters of concern, but nothing if compared to the great business of salvation. The best things in the world die with us; but our souls are immortal: they will, most certainly, be either eternally happy, or eternally miserable. If we lose our souls, we lose God and all; all is lost, and without hopes of recovery. Ah! my God, to lose thee is my greatest unhappiness. To lose thee for

ever, is a dismal subject of deep despair. To lose thee for a base pleasure, is a shameful folly.

“What will it avail a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man make for his soul?”—Matt. xvi. These are the words of our blessed Saviour. Let the world smile upon him: let him be mounted to the highest pinnacle of honour: let him enjoy all that his heart can possibly thirst after in this life; it will avail him nothing, if he lose his soul.

When our departing hour shall come, (and it certainly will come), although we know not how soon, shall we be able to comfort ourselves with the thoughts that we have been successful in the affairs of the world? that we have vainly aggrandized ourselves, and made a good provision for wife and children, if at the same time, the *main business of eternity* has been left unregarded? No: we shall repent, and perhaps too late, our unhappy neglect. We shall be convinced of the folly of wasting time, that precious time, which was given us for the salvation of our souls. We shall clearly see that the world “is vanity and affliction of spirit,” (Eccles. ii.); and we shall bewail our misfortune, in having forfeited our happiness, on account of these follies.

Examine yourselves, and let the affair of salvation be your greatest concern. Place it daily before your eyes. Husband well your time; and think it all little enough to purchase heaven. Remember that you are marching between two eternities. Choose that now, which you would choose at the hour of death. “Spare nothing to save your souls.”—*St. Jerom.*

## FRIDAY AFTER LOW-SUNDAY.

### ON OUR ONLY AFFAIR.

THE salvation of our souls is our only affair. If must be so, since it has been the sole design of the most blessed Trinity.

God the Father has created us to his own likeness. He has given us a will, memory, and understanding, that, by serving him, we may save our souls. God the Son was made man. He led a painful life, and died on a cross. And why? that, redeeming us from sin, we might every one be saved. God the Holy Ghost has called us to the true faith: he has sanctified us by his graces, and afforded us fair opportunities of doing good; and for no other end, than to *work out our salvation*. Thus hath the blessed Trinity every way concurred to save our souls. "One thing is necessary," says our dearest Saviour.—Luke, x. Yes; the *saving our souls* is absolutely necessary: all depends upon it.

We shall one day appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give in at the bar a full account of our lives. Will it serve our turn, to make the following plea? "Lord, we have done great things. We have gained the esteem and applause of men. We have heaped up riches. We have followed our inclinations. We have spent our time in jovial amusements. We have been kind to our neighbours. We have neglected nothing but—*the concern of salvation*." Will this do? And yet, can the greater part of mankind give in a better account? No, they will not be able, unless they change their lives.

The saints were wise. They esteemed their salvation their only business; and, therefore, they spent their lives in preparing for eternity. And can we think of going to heaven without taking pains for it? O merciful God, pardon our past neglects. Our lives for the future shall manifest a change of heart. 'We will save our souls: we are resolved upon it. But let thy grace make our resolutions effectual.

Examine yourselves, and see whether the affair of your souls has been your only affair. Remember, you have but one dear soul, and if once you lose it, it is lost for ever. Allow your soul but half the time that you throw away upon a wicked world, and you will be glorious saints.

## SATURDAY AFTER LOW-SUNDAY.

## ON THE DIFFICULTY OF SALVATION.

THE saving our souls is a hard task. This truth will evidently appear, when we consider the many and implacable enemies that we have unavoidably to engage with. How many *violent passions* must be retrenched! How many *inveterate habits* are to be overcome, before we can enter heaven! How strict a watch are we to keep over our senses! How many *dangerous occasions* to be shunned, in order to salvation! Does not this require indefatigable labour, and great grace?

The world, the flesh, and the devil, must be subdued. The world strives all it can to allure us by promises, to gain us by threats; to seduce us by its maxims, to corrupt us by example. The flesh, our domestic enemy, ceases not to attack us with its sinful charms. The devil, that watchful and cruel enemy of mankind, exerts his utmost vigour to involve us in his misery. How shall we overcome them? Are such enemies to be disregarded? Can we think it an easy matter to conquer them? Is it possible that they can be subdued by the best *natural strength*? No: and yet they must be subdued, or we shall lose our souls. Truly, salvation is a *hard task*.

No wonder our Saviour tells us, that heaven is to be taken by main force.—Matt. xi. No wonder, that the gate that leads to heaven is “narrow,” and that “few find it.”—Matt. vii. No wonder, that the kingdom of heaven is compared to a “precious stone.”—Matt. xiii. It is precious indeed, for we must relinquish everything in order to purchase it. We must strive *even to blood*, before we can purchase it.

Examine yourselves, and be surprised at the folly of the greatest part of mankind, who vainly imagine that they shall go to heaven without taking pains for it. You can do nothing

of yourselves; but, with the grace of God, "all things are possible."—Matt. xix. Ask it, then, in your fervent and humble prayers, and you will assuredly obtain it.

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

### ON THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING SAVED.

It is an unquestionable article of faith that, "through the grace of God, we may all be saved." Christ calls upon us: "Come unto me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you."—Matt. xi. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world."—Matt. xxv. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. v. Would Christ have thus called us, would he have invited us to his glorious kingdom if we were not in a way of being saved? Would he have informed us that the poor, the meek, the chaste, the humble should enter heaven, if there was no heaven for them? No: he never would have said it, he would never have redeemed us, nor would God have created us, had we not been capable of salvation.

It is blasphemy to charge God with the least injustice. And yet it must be a very great injustice to lay an injunction on us of saving our souls, under pain of damnation, and leave us destitute of the means to effect it. The way of salvation is certainly difficult; and we know that we have the devil and other implacable enemies confederate against us. But what then? Is not God above the devil? And, although we cannot defeat him by our own strength, are we not succoured by divine grace, in order to do it? Does it not support us under the sharpest conflicts? Is it not our comfort in the most threatening dangers?

Let us not be dejected at the number of our enemies. There are legions of angels ready to stand by us. The

Blessed Virgin and the saints will come to our assistance. We have the dreadful torments of the *dammèd* set before our eyes, to quicken our sloth; and we have the promise of everlasting bliss, to encourage us in the combat. What can we desire more?

Examine yourselves, and be resolved to do your utmost to save your souls. It is in your power to be saved: therefore, if you are lost, it will be through your own fault. Reflect on the opportunities you have had, above thousands, of purchasing happiness; and remember, that “the more you have received, the more you have to answer for.”—Luke, xii.

## MONDAY—SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER.

### ON THE MEANS OF SALVATION.

It is no small grace to be born of Christian parents, whilst so great a part of the world lies buried in infidelity. It is no small grace, to be educated in the bosom of the *true Catholic Church*, whilst our unhappy country is led away by error. It is no slender mercy, to have been instructed in our youth, and to have had daily opportunities of saving our souls. How many at this time are lamenting in the flames of hell, who, had they been favoured with half the helps that we continually receive, would probably have been saints in heaven.

What mean the sacraments? Are they not given us as helps to salvation? Are they not instituted for the purpose of bathing our souls in Christ’s healing blood? It was easy for the apostles to be saints, when they had their Lord with them. And shall it be difficult for us, who have him in our churches, on our altars, in the Eucharist, offering himself to be our food?

What means the Mass, that adorable sacrifice? Why, it is offered to heaven for the expiation of our sins. It is truly adorable, since a God is the priest, and a God the victim.

How many comfortable exhortations do we hear? How many good books are put into our hands, to wean our affections from a flattering world, and to fix them on a more desirable good? How soon were we taught to pray, and to pray for heaven? How many examples have we to excite us to virtue? We have the wonderful example of a crucified Deity; we have the encouraging lives of saints and martyrs. And are not these great helps? Nay, every respective state of life, every sickness, every calamity; our very passions, if rightly managed, serve as so many helps to salvation.

Examine yourselves, and see what use you have made of these distinguishing favours. Repent of past neglects, and consider it a singular mercy that you are not cast off in punishment for them. Who is the better for your happiness besides yourselves? God is not.

## TUESDAY—SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER.

### ON THE SMALL NUMBER OF THE ELECT.

THE number of the elect is small. Out of the whole world, only Noah and his family were preserved from the deluge, (Gen. vii.); out of five populous cities, Sodom, Gomorrah, and the neighbouring ones, only four persons were timely delivered from a fiery destruction.—Gen. xix. Of many hundred thousand souls that came out of Egypt, only two, Joshua and Caleb, entered Canaan, the land of promise.—Num. xxiv. All these instances are an emblem of this truth: “Many are called, but few are chosen.”—Matt. xxii.

No wonder, then, that the elect are compared to the few olives that are left on the trees after a diligent gathering.—Isa. xxiv. No wonder that they are likened to the small number of grapes remaining on the vines after a well-gleaned vintage.—Ibid. No wonder that they are balanced with the few ears of corn, which have escaped the searching hand of

the careful reaper. No wonder that it is said, that "the gate is straight," and the "way narrow," that leads to life, and that "few only find it."—Matt. vii. Are we not awakened by these amazing truths? Does not the small number of the elect rouse our dull thoughts, and make them intent on the business of salvation?

Were we assured that one man, and only one out of ten thousand present was to be damned, we should certainly tremble lest it might be our lot. The apostles were terrified, when their dear Lord told them that there was a devil amongst them; nor could they rest till they were rightly informed that Judas was the wretch. Perhaps, out of ten thousand, there will hardly one be saved. And are we unconcerned? The news of a ship being lost, though there are hundreds at sea, makes every engaged merchant apprehensive of his effects: and are we not solicitous for ourselves? Can we pass by unregardedly the concerns of heaven, when it evidently appears that there are but few who arrive at this blissful port?

Examine yourselves, and be not so presumptuous as is the generality of the world. By a good life "make your calling and election sure."—Matt. xxvi. "You must be of the number of the few, if you wish to be of the number of the saved."—*St. Jerom.*

## WEDNESDAY—SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER.

### ON THE VERY SMALL NUMBER OF THE ELECT.

THE number of the elect is *very small*. At this present time, Africa, two thirds of Asia, the greatest part of America, lie grovelling in the dark shades of infidelity. In Europe, alone, is Christianity generally known. And yet, in this least part of the world, how many are seduced by the spirit of heresy? Amongst the true believing Christians, how few live up to the



principles of their faith, to the rules of the Gospel ! Alas ! daily experience convinces us that there is but little good corn, and that the number of the chosen is very small.

The Christian must follow the example of Jesus Christ. He must conform his life to the life of his blessed Master. He must carry his cross ; that is, he must renounce himself, mortify his senses, subject his passions and sensual inclinations to the will of God ; otherwise, there is no heaven for him. Is this his carriage ? Are there many to be found who practise these lessons ? Or, rather, is not the number very small ?

True it is, that there are some who live regularly in the world, who have merited the repute of being honest men, and who are, according to appearance, good Christians. But, will none of these have their portion with the reprobate ? There are others who have shut themselves up in close monasteries, there to spend their lives in works of piety and penance. And will they all be saved ? Alas ! what will become of us ! O dearest Saviour, who hast redeemed me by thy blood, suffer it not to be shed in vain. If others run in crowds to hell, I will, for one, strive to save my soul. I am resolved to do it. I crave thy mercy to strengthen this my resolution.

Examine yourselves, and let not the too general practice of the world be your rule. If they will unhappily ruin themselves, do not you do so, merely for company's sake. Meditate frequently on this important truth : " many are called, but few are chosen."—Matt. xx. Imitate the saints, who, by humble fear, worked out their salvation.

## THURSDAY—SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER.

THE UNCERTAINTY OF SALVATION OUGHT TO EXCITE US TO A  
CONSTANT RENEWAL OF OUR FERVOUR.\*

SHALL I be of the number of the elect? or, shall I be cast into outer darkness with the devil and his angels? These are questions which every thinking Christian puts to himself from time to time. But how small is the number of those who benefit by these questions in a proper manner! True it is, that we must be of the number, either of the elect, or of the reprobate. There is no medium between the two companies. Oh! the dreadful alternative! A crown of glory, or a bed of unquenchable fire, awaits us for all eternity. And yet we go on, in a kind of calm and stupid tranquillity, as if we had nothing to fear! Oh! why will not man think seriously? Why will he not open his eyes, to see the dreadful precipice, on the brink of which he is standing? The goodness of God has forewarned him of the uncertainty of his future state, on purpose that he should exert his powers to make his calling and election sure; and he contents himself with saying: "I know not whether I shall be saved or lost." It is not in this manner that the worldling acts. When the probability of procuring a fortune is held out to him, he does not content himself with saying: "Perhaps I shall not succeed." He applies earnestly to procure the means of success—he perseveres in his labours—he strives to overcome every obstacle—and he desists not till it evidently appears that success cannot be obtained.

Why do not we act in the same manner? There is no uncertainty in this business. We may save our souls if we will. Let us, then, enter upon the great work in good earnest. Let us daily meditate on the awful precipice on which we stand. Let us entertain the Christian sentiments of fear and trembling.

Let us, every day, endeavour to increase our fervour, and encourage ourselves to greater exertions in the divine service, by the prospect of the reward which is held out before us. “Let us do good, not fainting.”—Gal. vi. Sloth and indifference will lead us to hell: but diligence in constantly renewing our fervour, will bring us to heaven.

Examine whether or not you have prosecuted the affair of your salvation in this manner. Fix your eyes on the crown of glory which is set before you. Stretch forward towards it, and suffer not the things of the world to impede your progress. Persevere to the end, and you will not fail to obtain possession of all that your heart can desire for an endless eternity.

## FRIDAY—SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER.

THE MERCIES OF GOD OUGHT TO INSPIRE US WITH A CONFIDENCE  
OF SALVATION.\*

“AHL” said St. Peter Chrysologus, (*Serm.* 42.) “let us admire the mercies of our Lord, who hath allotted only one day for our trial, and has given us the whole time of our life wherein to do penance. If the time of infancy and youth be spent without a knowledge of God, maturer years may bring us to a knowledge of him. Old age may reclaim us from the errors of youthful follies: we may repent of our past sins, when the splendour of worldly vanities has lost its brilliancy: we may renounce our criminal habits, when the opportunity of indulging them is taken away: we may make a virtue of necessity: and a man may die a penitent, after having long lived in a course of criminal excesses.”

But, although the mercies of God are long suffering, we are not to consider them as our certain lot. Sinners are not allowed to abuse the mercies of God with impunity. But, were his mercies to be extended to us, after years spent in ignorance,

and in the indulgence of our passions; that is, were we to experience a sincere call to repentance and piety, even after the greatest part of life had been devoted to vanity, the mercies of God would come in to our assistance, and enable us to gain the salvation of our souls. One day only is allotted for our trial, and that is, after our mortal course is concluded. Before that day is arrived, we may make our peace with God by sincere repentance, provided we return to him with a truly contrite and humble heart.

Oh! let us then turn to our God with our whole hearts. His mercies are at our command. He stretches out his hand to help us. Were our sins as numerous as the hairs of our head, or as the sands of the sea, he will not reject us. He desires our salvation: and shall not we desire it ourselves? He labours, as it were, for our salvation: and shall not we labour for it ourselves? How little must be our esteem of that inestimable treasure, if we refuse to submit to so easy a task!

Examine how matters stand with you in this respect. Do not flatter yourselves in your sins with the idea, that it will be time enough to repent at a future period. Your last hour is at hand. At least, live as if you knew that the Lord was nigh. Consecrate the remainder of your lives to him, whether they be long or short. Watch, pray, and repent, and your salvation will be secure.

## SATURDAY—SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER.

ON THE SACRIFICES WHICH THE SAINTS, IN EVERY AGE, HAVE  
MADE TO ENSURE THEIR SALVATION.\*

ONE of the principal effects, which the spirit of God produced in the minds of the first Christians, was a love of retirement. The deserts, indeed, were not peopled with holy

solitaries, until peace was restored to the church. But, before that time, what multitudes of Christians renounced the world, and spent their days in pious solitude! what numbers of the weaker sex embraced the state of virginity, in order to be united with Jesus alone! how many of every state and condition deposited their whole property in the hands of the apostles and of their successors, in order to be at liberty to devote their whole time to prayer! How eloquently do St. Justin, Tertullian, and Origen, extol the disinterestedness of these Christians, and the total alienation of their affections from the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world.

In fact, the spirit of the gospel can never be allied with the spirit of the world; nor can a Christian advance in the ways of piety, unless he meditate on the laws of God in the silence of retirement. "The true disciples of Jesus," says St. Gregory, "are not anxious for perishable things, when they do not possess them; and when they possess them, they do not fix their hearts upon them. They dread, lest their interior repose should be disturbed, by being obliged to attend to worldly business."

Why are not we ready to make the same sacrifices? Is not salvation as dear to us, as it was to them? Why then do we not make it the great object of our lives, as they did? Alas! to judge from our way of living, it would seem that we had business of a more important kind to attend to. How ought we to blush when we compare our conduct with theirs! What a contrast between them and us! They sought to conceal themselves from the eyes of men: we, generally speaking, seek to be known, applauded, and honoured.

Examine what degree of pleasure you find in recollection and retirement. Seek to form a closet in the interior of your souls, and there go, from time to time, and commune in secret with your God. He will always be ready to meet you.

## THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

HOW MUCH RETIREMENT MAY BE MADE TO CONTRIBUTE  
TO SALVATION.\*

“O RETIREMENT!” exclaims St. Ephrem, “thou art the ladder to heaven—the mother of compunction—the mirror, in which all our failings may be discerned—the source of meekness—the companion of humility, and of the fear of God—the light of the soul. O retirement! which teacheth us to know our thoughts, and to discover the interior movements of our hearts, thou art the ground work of salvation, the enemy of intemperance, the school of prayer, the peace of souls, the agreeable yoke, the sweet burden. O retirement! thou art the certain remedy against temptations, the constant opposer of imprudence, the joy of the heart, the guardian of the eyes, the ears, and the tongue; a powerful helper in the acquisition of every virtue, a field fertile in the produce of every choice fruit, a wall and a rampart for all those, who are sincerely willing to fight for the possession of an eternal kingdom.”

This was the language of the saints. Their hearts panted after retirement and silence; and the reason was, because in them they found their *only good*, which was *God alone*. “All in him,” said St. Francis of Sales, “all by him, all with him, all for him, all him himself.” Ah, Lord! that I could exclaim at the foot of my crucifix: “where shall I find a void in my soul, that cannot be filled up, except it be by useless conversations, vain amusements, and worldly expectations? No: I am wholly in thee, wholly for thee, wholly with thee, wholly to thee, and thou art wholly to me. Why do I not converse with thee alone, O my God, since thou art willing to converse with me? O God alone! God alone! what extent, what efficacy, what sweetness is contained in this single sentence!”

Examine yourselves, and be surprised that you seldom find God, although he is every where. Hurried away by the various avocations of the world, you are seldom with yourselves alone. Fly the world, and the dissipations of the world, and seek to commune in private with your God, for thus only will you learn to find him.

## MONDAY—THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER.

HOW MUCH SILENCE CONTRIBUTES TO INCREASE THE LOVE OF  
GOD IN THE SOUL.\*

St. Aelred relates, (*Butler's SS. January 12.*) that the monk Simon went and came as one deaf and dumb, always recollected in God, and that he was such a lover of silence, as scarcely to speak a few words to the Prior, even on necessary occasions. "His silence, however," he adds, "was sweet, agreeable, and full of edification. The very sight of his humility, stifled my pride, and made me blush at the immortification of my looks." Oh! how do the examples of the saints condemn our tepidity and sloth! Aelred acknowledged, with all humility, the edification he received from the amiable silence of Simon; and yet how admirably had he himself, by the love of silence, advanced in the path of perfection. "May thy voice," said he (*ibid.*), "sound in my ears, O sweet Jesus, that my heart may learn to love thee—that my mind may love thee—that the interior powers, and, as it were, the very bowels of my soul, and the very marrow of my heart, may love thee, and that my affections may embrace thee, my only true good, my sweet and delightful joy! What is love? My God, if I mistake not, it is the wonderful delight of the soul, so much the more sweet, as more pure: so much the more overflowing and inebriating, as more ardent. He who loves thee, possesses thee: and he possesses thee in proportion as he loves thee, because thou art *love*. This is that abundance with which thy

beloved are inebriated, melting away from themselves, that they may pass into thee by loving thee."

O amiable silence! how effectually dost thou contribute to advance the soul in the love of God! Let us admire the silence of these holy solitaries, and, as far as our state of life will admit, let us imitate their silence, by a spirit of recollection.

Examine yourselves, and consider that "much talking is much foolishness."—Eccl. v. A silent tongue shows a wise heart. Repress, therefore, the spirit of talking: but let your intention be, that you may be more recollected in God. Silence will not profit you, unless it causes you to turn your thoughts to God, and to advance in the ways of divine love.

## TUESDAY—THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER.

THE BENEFITS OF SILENCE AND RETIREMENT MAY BE ENJOYED  
IN THE MIDST OF WORLDLY OCCUPATIONS.\*

THE number of those who retire wholly from all commerce with the world is comparatively very small. It will probably not be our vocation. In the world we are; and in the world we shall remain. Must we say, therefore, that the benefits of retirement and silence are placed beyond our reach? By no means. Great multitudes of the saints were neither monks nor hermits; and they enjoyed all the benefits of these holy virtues. Whose time was more taken up, or who had more temporal concerns to attend to, than St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis Borgia, St. Francis of Sales, or St. Vincent of Paul? and yet they were men of prayer, had their times of silence and retirement, and arrived to the highest degree of perfection.

The truth is, that the man who sincerely seeks God, finds him everywhere. And God, who is never backward in his gifts, imparts to him, in the midst of the most pressing occu-



pations, the love, the spirit, and the benefits of retirement. He unfolds to him all its charms: and he, delighted with its sweets, lifts up his hands to the *holy mountain*, from whence help is to come to support him in his employments.

Francis Corillo said to St. Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, to whom he was secretary, that bishops were to be pitied, if they were all to be incessantly tormented with business as he was. The saint made answer: "To enjoy exterior peace, we must always reserve in our hearts, amidst all affairs, as it were, a secret closet, where we are to keep retired within ourselves, and where no business of the world can enter."—*Butler's SS., May 10.* Oh! that we made it our constant rule to do the same!

Examine how far you suffer the things of this world to engross your time. You were not made for the world; why, then, should you enslave yourself to it! Oh! retire from it as often as you can, into the interior of your heart, and enjoy your God in solitude. The blessings of this interior retirement are worth enjoying, and within your reach. Lose not such invaluable treasures by your own neglect.

## WEDNESDAY—THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER.

### ON PREDESTINATION.

It is very dangerous and very unprofitable to examine into the secret of *predestination*. It is very dangerous, because it is naturally calculated to cast us into despair, or a wicked life. It is very unprofitable, because it is not our business to dive into the impenetrable mysteries of God, or to think of fathoming the decrees of heaven. O God! we adore, in the profoundest silence, thy unsearchable judgments.

God from eternity knows our lot: what will it be? Why do we ask these questions? Is it not enough that his goodness loves us? Has he not shown us visible marks of his love? Is not the wonderful work of redemption a full

demonstration of an excessive love? Has he not commanded us to trust in him? Has he not called, and invited, and pressed us to his service? Why then are we concerned at what our lot will be? Why do we ask these unprofitable questions?

What need I labour for heaven, when it is already known whether I shall be of the number of the *lost* or *saved*? Deluding artifice! Unhappy stratagem of the devil, laid for the destruction of innumerable souls! It is decreed that I shall die. When the hour is come, the world cannot save me. Am I not, therefore, to take care of my health? May I reasonably reject the advice of the physician, under the malignity of a distemper? Is not the prince to engage his enemies, the lawyer to plead his cause, because the matter is determined in the appointments of heaven? Ought the farmer to sit still, and let his land lie fallow, and yet expect a plentiful harvest, because a good or a bad crop is already designed by an unerring Providence? No, certainly. And yet the case is the same in the business of salvation.

Examine yourselves, and be careful to shun this diabolical illusion. If God has decreed your happiness, remember that he has decreed you should employ the means, namely, that you should labour for it. You must *strive* to enter in at the narrow gate. It is through "many tribulations that you are to obtain heaven."—Acts, xiv.

## THURSDAY—THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER.

### ON THE VANITY OF THE WORLD.

NEVER was man so blessed with plenty as was the great king Solomon. Peace—prosperity—all the glory of the world smiled upon him.—2 Chron. ix. His praises reached the farthest corners of the earth. The queen of Sheba was struck with admiration at his wisdom. And yet, what were his own

thoughts of all he possessed: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity. I saw all the things that are under the sun, and behold they are vanity and affliction of spirit."—Eccles. i. "I said, I will go and abound in delights; and this was vanity. I denied myself no pleasure that my heart could desire; and yet all was vanity and affliction of spirit."—Eccles. ii. This great prince was the wisest of men; and what he here asserts he found to be true by his own experience. And shall we be in love with this vain world? Shall we love it to the prejudice of our souls?

The world is *vain*, because nothing in it can satisfy our hearts. Let us question our hearts on the subject:—have we found true content amidst the pleasures of this life? Or, were they not accompanied with some uneasiness? Were not the honours to which we have been promoted, embittered with envy or racking ambition? When in full possession of plenty, were not our thoughts on something more? No: although honours—riches—pleasures—were to be our constant attendants, although we were in want of nothing to favour humour, or to gratify inclination, we should not be truly satisfied. Is not the world, therefore, most vain?

Tell me: what is it the world recommends, which is not made up of vanity? Honours are vain, because they are transitory and inconstant. Besides, where is the glory in being esteemed or praised by sinners? Riches are vain, because they are perishable, and of themselves too apt to disturb our thoughts, and damn our souls. Pleasures are vain, because carnal, sinful, and of short duration. Beauty is vain, because so very fading and inconsiderable in itself. Go, vain world! thou hast nothing to do with a Christian heart; it is fixed on better objects—the joys of heaven.

Examine yourselves, and set not your affections on a vain world. In all occurrences of life, remember the end for which you were created: it was to serve God, and not the world. If you desire solid riches, they are to be found in God. If

you seek after pleasures, they are to be found in him. Only God, who is the charming beauty of angels, can satisfy your hearts.

## FRIDAY—THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER.

### ON THE WICKEDNESS OF THE WORLD.

“THE whole world is seated in wickedness.”—1 John, v. To engage in its company is always dangerous. Its maxims are detestable, and its customs most pernicious. It is overrun with pride, luxury, and ambition. Detraction, murder, perjury, and over-reaching know no bounds. It encourages scandals, in defiance of the woes pronounced against them. It is an enemy to God, and to the good of souls. How much vice and horrid profaneness generally reigns in the Christian world. And can we set our affections on it? O Jesus, deliver us from this dreadful evil!

If the determined worldling chance to speak of God, is it not to curse and blaspheme his name? If he hears his holy word, is it not, too often, to ridicule it? If he enters into the church, is it not to profane it by his crying sacrileges and lewd behaviour? If he thinks of the poor, is it not to oppress them? Alas! he is unacquainted with a mortified spirit. The Gospel, with him, is become a folly; innocence, an opposition to the laws of nature; humility, beneath a man; patience, a subject more fit to be preached to the winds than to men. What pity it is that even the better sort should be so much puffed up with worldly pride, so corrupted by its maxims, and so foolishly led away by its pleasures.

Christians, what are you doing? Can you own this sacred name, and still take part with a depraved world in opposition to your God? Tell me, who created you? Was it God, or the world? Who redeemed your souls from the gates of hell? Who preserves you every instant from being precipitated into that unhappy gulph? Is it God, or the

world? To whom did you make your first vows of fealty in the holy sacrament of baptism? Was it to God or to the world? It was to God: and why do you not serve him?

Examine yourselves, and conceive a detestation of this criminal world. Hate it, because it is an enemy to God, and to your souls. Hate it, because it has ruined an infinite number of souls, for whom Christ died. Pray for poor worldlings, who are blindly running on to their eternal perdition.

## SATURDAY—THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER.

### ON THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE WORLD.

WHAT is become of the many healthy and strong men whom we were formerly acquainted with? They were cut off in the flower of their age, although the world promised them a long life. Where are those *great ones*, who had a noble train of attendants following at their heels? They are fallen into disgrace, or they are reduced to beggary, although the world flattered them with a happy life. Is there anything more deceitful? Where are those gallant princes, who laboured, by their brave achievements, to transmit their names to after ages? They are almost all forgotten, although the world promised to erect monuments to their glorious memory. How little is an Alexander or a Cæsar now thought of? True it is, “their memory has perished with the sound thereof,”—(Ps. ix.): their “remembrance is as ashes trodden under foot.”—Job, xiii.

Can we be in love with this perfidious world? Has it not above four hundred of Achab's false prophets, to flatter and deceive us? In every corner it has a treacherous Joab, to embrace with one arm and stab with the other. It wants not a Judas, to give the betraying kiss of peace. Oh! miserable and deceitful world! Who can love thee—who cannot

but hate thee? Thy sorrows are true; thy pleasures are false.

Christians, let us despise it; let us abhor its too common neglect of God, and of the concerns of the soul. Let us dread its repeated profanation of the sacraments and holy things. Let us despise its pride and vain ambition; let us despise its base and carnal pleasures; let us despise its corrupt customs, and exorbitant love of riches; for all these things lead to ruin. By this contempt of the world we shall possess God, the endless comfort of men and angels.

Examine yourselves, and let your lives demonstrate a contempt of the world. Say not, as many do, that it is vain, wicked, and deceitful, when, at the same time, they caress it in their actions. This will not serve, unless it be to your own condemnation, by acting manifestly against your consciences. Ah! how great a contempt had Christ and his saints for this cheating world.

#### FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

##### ON A SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD.

“I AM not of this world.”—John, viii. “I pray not for the world.”—John, xvii. “Wo be to the world.”—Matt. xviii. “You are of this world: I said, therefore, you shall die in your sins.”—John, viii. These are the words of Christ, wherein he condemns, again and again, the proceedings of this wicked world. Is not this sufficient cause for any Christian to separate from it? It is an enemy of Christ: and can we, his followers, cherish it within our breasts?

All that Christ has said, in regard of the world, he has confirmed by example. He was born in a neglected stable, and in a dark night. For thirty years he led a private life, under a carpenter’s roof. When he appeared in public, he mostly frequented the company of the poor and inferior sort

of Jews. He chose for his disciples persons mean and ignorant; and he died the death of the most criminal malefactors. Does not Christ, then, teach us, by his example also, a separation from the world? Was he not wholly estranged from its pleasures and its indulging ease? Let us, therefore, follow him. We are Christians, and, on this account, we are every way obliged to copy out his example in our lives. It should be natural for members to follow their head.

How many glorious saints have voluntarily left the world, in imitation of their master! How many confessors have shut themselves up in close monasteries, choosing rather to undergo the greatest bodily rigours, than be led away by a vain world! How many martyrs, and, amongst them, tender virgins, nobly born, have relinquished riches, honours, friends, and pleasures; and, like an Agatha, have sacrificed themselves to the worst of torments, rather than take part with a profane world in opposition to God! Do we imitate these saints? I fear we cannot say it. But are we, at least, resolved to renounce the world in heart and affection? This we must do, if we hope one day to share in the glory of the saints.

Examine yourselves, and conclude with these thoughts:—What! shall I damn my soul for the short pleasures of this life? If I lose my soul, what will it avail me to gain the whole world? What true repose can the world afford me? I see that it is vain, wicked, and deceitful. Oh! my God, take me out of the world, or take the world from me. Remove it from my heart. Let me die to it, that I may live to thee.

## MONDAY—FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

### ON A HEART DIVIDED BETWEEN GOD AND THE WORLD.

THERE is no dividing the heart between God and the world. The impossibility of this will appear, when we examine their

maxims. God declares that the *poor* are happy; the world regards them as the most miserable creatures. Christ commends the *meek and humble*; the world scorns them. Christ condemns the inordinate love of riches; the world pursues them. Christ preaches penance (Matt. vi.); the world pleases itself in pleasure. Christ teaches the pardon of injuries; the world seeks revenge. Are light and darkness more opposite? No one can serve two masters.—Matt. vi.

Christian! why wilt thou thus unjustly divide thy heart? It is thy God who created thee, thy God who redeemed thee by his blood, thy God who preserves thee in all dangers; and whatever blessings thou receivest are derived from him. And wilt thou not make him a suitable return? He calls upon thee: “Son, give me thy heart.”—Prov. xxiii. And is it too much to give it to him entirely? Is thy heart too much for the immense Lord of heaven and earth, who has given his whole self to thee? Do the angels, do the saints think so? “Woe be to the double heart.”—Eccl. ii. He is worse than an idolator; because he knows his God, and yet sets up worldly idols to confront him. What can he expect but the severest judgments, who, Philistine like, sets up the “ark and Dagon” upon the same altar?—1 Kings, v.

Let us sound our hearts. Are they fixed on the world? Are they bent upon vanities? Are they in pursuit of riches, or the vain applause of men? Are they led away by criminal pleasures? If so, they belong not to God. He is a *jealous* God, and can bear no rival. He is a *loving* God, and therefore will be the very centre of our hearts. We must give him all, or he will have none. O Lord! my heart is in thy hands; take it as thou gavest it. If anything could hinder me from offering it to thee, it would be the meanness of the offering.

Examine yourselves, and see if your affections are fixed on God. Let no love of creatures take place of him. Pretend not to serve God and the world; it is a thing impossible. The



great commandment of the law is: "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."—Matt. xxii. Religiously observe it.

## TUESDAY—FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

### ON WORLDLY SOLICITUDE.

To be unmindful of God, and his terrible judgments; to think little about the grievousness of sin, and its sad effects; to have no dread of the approaching hour of death, or of an endless eternity; to find no relish in heavenly things, are great misfortunes. Are they not the effect of *worldly solicitude*? How seldom does the solicitous person think of another life. How incapable is he of preparing for it. O Lord, deliver me from this unhappy solicitude. I see that it clogs my soul so violently that I can neither pray, nor read, nor think of its concerns. Oh! let me not be so unjust, and strangely ungrateful as to fix my heart on anything but thee. Let me not act the heathen by placing my confidence in the things of this world. Ah! let me not prove such an enemy to myself.

God has given us life: and can we imagine that he has not a tender care for our preservation? He has delivered over his eternal Son for the redemption of our souls; and can he overlook our temporal wants? The most raging monsters forget not their young ones: and will our heavenly Father be unmindful of us? He has sweetly adorned the lilies of the valley: and will not his providence afford us raiment? Why, then, are we solicitous? "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be given to you."—Matt. vi.

There is a great deal of bitterness in all *worldly solicitude*, but no pleasure. Where is the pleasure in being tormented, day and night, by restless cares? Where is the comfort in enjoying inconstant and perishable creatures? Where is the satisfaction in being unmercifully torn from our beloved

treasures? May we not unexpectedly hear that fearful call: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee?"—Luke, xii.

Examine yourselves, and be careful to follow the seasonable advice of your dear Master. "Be not solicitous."—Matt. vi. Be not solicitous for the vanities of the world: it is a criminal solicitude. Be not too solicitous for the necessities of life. In all occurrences entirely depend on the divine goodness. If you must be solicitous, let it be for heavenly things, which alone can serve to make you happy.

### WEDNESDAY—FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

#### ON PROVIDENCE.

THE creation of the world is the work of Providence, and there is nothing in it but what is influenced by the *Almighty mover*. It reaches from the throne to the cottage: it extends to the most contemptible and vilest insects. The sun, moon, and stars are guided by it. Every breath we draw, our understanding, grace, whatever concerns either soul or body, either this world or the next, are the effects of Providence. Why then are we so solicitous for the things of this world, when we have an all-helping Providence to rely upon? The patriarch Joseph, in all his sufferings, was assisted by Providence: "it descended with him even into the pit."—Wisd. x. The Israelites, in the wilderness, experienced the effects of Providence: it showered down upon them manna from heaven. Five barley loaves and two fishes were multiplied by Providence, so as to fill five thousand people.—Matt. xiv. Are not these encouraging instances to rely on Providence?

How many ways has the divine Providence provided for our souls! It thought of us, long before we had a being. It has enlightened us with the true faith, although born and bred in the midst of a people seduced by heresy. It has afforded us the help of prayers, sacraments, exhortations, pious examples,

and daily opportunities of doing good. How many souls has it reclaimed from the abyss of sin! How many has it brought to a right understanding of themselves, by temporal calamities! How often have our own hearts been suddenly moved by secret inspirations, when we least deserved them! O the Providence of God! how “strongly” does “it move,” and how “sweetly” does “it dispose all things.”—Wisd. viii.

Does the world frown upon us? Let us rely on Providence. Are we molested by temptations? Let us trust in Providence. Are we abashed at the sight of our sins? Let us confide in Providence. Are we persecuted in our property, good name, or religion? Let us patiently wait the holy will of Providence.

Examine yourselves, and labour to obtain an humble resignation under all the appointments of Heaven. Throw yourselves into the kind arms of Providence, having these words stamped upon your hearts, and on your lips: “O Lord, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”—Matt. vi.

## THURSDAY—FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

### ON BAD COMPANY.

WICKED company is a most pernicious evil: it is a rock against which millions of souls have been irreparably wrecked. Simplicity, shame, and fear, are the bulwarks of innocence; but they are all subverted by bad company. Alas! how many are engaged in the habit of mortal sin, which they would have never known, had they not been instructed by evil company! How many have a natural abhorrence of the blackest crimes, and would still retain the same, had they not been corrupted by evil company! How many have an inbred shame of vice, and which would have continued with them, had it not been destroyed by wicked company! and destroyed in such a manner, as that they have oftentimes been ashamed, not of vice, but of appearing innocent.

It was once the unhappy case of the great St. Augustine. Hear what he says: "I went headlong into vice, and with such blindness, that I was ashamed to be less wicked than those of my age, especially when I heard them glory in their sins. When I could not equal the most impious of my companions, I feigned sins, lest my innocence should render me more contemptible." Good God, deliver us from this dreadful evil! May our lives be inoffensive to every body. May we never be led astray by sinful company.

We must fly from the midst of Babylon. To carry fire in our bosoms, and prevent it from burning; to live in the midst of a contagious distemper, and not be affected by it, is impossible. Bad company is a raging pestilence. Let us pretend what we will, if we do not fly from it, we shall be infected by it.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved to avoid all wicked company. Fly the company of those who sollicit you to sin, or introduce in your presence immodest, or disedifying discourse. Shun the company of those who are of an undisciplined life. Make choice of such as are regular and virtuous. The welfare of your souls depends upon it.

## FRIDAY—FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

### ON PIOUS CONVERSATION.

"REVEAL not your hearts to every body, but with the wise, and fearing God, treat your affairs."—*Foll. Chr. l. 1. c. 8.* Example has, at all times, a commanding influence over the soul, but never so much effect as when strengthened by conversation. Pious conversation is the nursery of virtue. Here we conceive a detestation of sin: here we learn to shake off ignorance, and all heavy slothfulness in the way of devotion: here Christian virtues are implanted in our hearts, and our affections weaned from a distracting world. Let us embrace it.

As Christians, we are expected to be a leading light to the world: our “good works” are to “shine before men.”—Matt. v. And can we give a greater testimony of these duties, than by frequenting the *company of pious persons*? Will not the world conclude that we are good, when it sees that we make choice of no other company than that of the virtuous? when it finds us conversing with the humble and chaste, with the meek and patient, with the sober and religious? when it finds us in love with the company of those who have their thoughts in heaven, and the fear of God before their eyes?

O God, I know my weakness. Nature, I see, is so very corrupt, that it leads me to follow that company which favours its inclinations, although it be to the prejudice of my soul. O give me thy grace, that my conversation may be with the just; that, with them, I may ever think and speak of thee; and that on earth I may begin that happy entertainment which shall never end.

Examine yourselves, and take care you engage in no other company but that of the good. In all conversation, let a modest behaviour accompany your words. Imprint on your minds the good example of the virtuous, and strive to imitate them by a blessed emulation.

## SATURDAY—FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

### ON DISCOURSE.

A PERSON must be perfect, before he can expect not to exceed in discourse. It was the saying of a great man, that as often as he engaged in company, though innocent, he always returned *less a man*. Have we not reason to believe that this is the case, when we see that the generality of discourse runs into excess, and that the most unblemished conversation is accompanied with a variety of unprofitable words?

Let us lay our hands upon our hearts: can we safely say

that we have not gone too far by *uncharitable censures, rash expressions, unreasonable passion?* Have we not betrayed a corrupt heart, by a liberty of speech? and have we not been ashamed, in our recollected moments, of what we have too forwardly uttered in discourse? I fear we have. Let us, therefore, redress past failings, and remember, that no man gives greater proof of the subjection of his passions than he who duly commands his tongue.

Alas! how sad a thing must it be, to profane that tongue by lewd discourse, which has been sanctified by the blood of Christ in the sacrament! How deplorable, to make that tongue the source of oaths and blasphemies, which has been created for no other end but to magnify its maker! How grievous an abuse, to employ that member for the destruction of its neighbour, which was given as a means to help him on towards heaven? “Set, O Lord, a guard upon my mouth, and a door of discretion on my lips: may my heart never utter words of malice.”—Ps. cxl.

Examine yourselves, and if the tenour of your discourse be to blacken your neighbour, to expose his imperfections, or to stamp vice on his heart, resolve to break it off, for it is very wicked. If your discourse must savour of vanity, or self-commendation; if you cannot speak with offending God, it is better to be silent. For, take notice, you are to “render an account, at the day of judgment, for every idle word.”—Matt. xii.

## FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

### ON THE PROPER USE OF THE TONGUE.\*

WHAT, in general, is the use that we make of our tongue? Is it to praise God, and to promote his glory, and the sanctification of our souls? Hereafter, if “our place shall be in

peace, and our abode in Sion," (Ps. lxxv.), the praises of God will be our eternal occupation. No other subject will then enter our thoughts. In this miserable world, indeed, our attention must necessarily be divided, and our speech must, from time to time, be directed to objects which, in themselves, do not immediately relate to God. We must converse upon business, and our nature seems to require that we should sometimes enjoy the pleasures of society in innocent and relaxing conversation. But these, although not immediately relating to God, may be made to contribute to his honour and glory. In the same manner as we are recommended to seek the glory of our maker, in our "eating, drinking, sleeping, and waking," (1 Cor. x.) so likewise, in the concerns of business, or in the innocent amusements of society, we may have the desirable object always in view.

But, where is the man who attends to this during the whole of the day? St. Bonaventure says, that we ought to open our lips for no other than the three following purposes, namely, to confess our sins, to sing forth the praises of God, or to edify and instruct our fellow-creatures. Do all our conversations tend to one or the other of these purposes? If, living in the world, greater liberty be allowed to the tongue, than for persons living in retirement, are we allowed to be inattentive to the honour and glory of God? If we are enjoined to promote that object in the performance of the necessary duties of life, is it not an equal duty to attend to the same in our conversations? Ah! were we truly desirous of pleasing God, and saving our souls, we should find little difficulty in making all the concerns of life, in which the tongue is employed, contribute to our advancement in virtue, and to our eternal good.

Examine yourselves on this point. Many abuse the use of speech, by devoting it to the cause of pride and vain-glory. Others profane their tongue by uttering curses and blasphemies, or by propagating defamation and scandal. Do you keep a

strict guard over it; and suffer not that member to be the instrument of your condemnation, which was given you to promote your interests in this world, and your salvation in the next.

## ROGATION-MONDAY.

### ON THE TIME.\*

THE three first days of this week are set apart by the church for public supplications and penance. Alas! was there ever a time when supplications and penance were more necessary? St. Mammertus, Bishop of Vienne, in France, in the fifth century, was the first who commanded these days to be observed. At that time, visible judgments from heaven were inflicted on the people of his diocese; and, in hopes of appeasing the anger of God, he ordained that these three days should be devoted to prayer and penance. The effects were of the most encouraging kind. Many bishops were induced to institute the same observance in their respective dioceses, in hopes that the same happy effects would be produced. At length, the church made the observance of these three days a precept of obligation on all the faithful.

Was there ever a time when such an injunction was more seasonable? Or, was there ever a time, when the effects produced by its primitive observance ought to be more ardently desired? Wickedness hath increased to an alarming degree. The judgments of God on the sons of men have been inflicted in a striking manner: and the prospect of the future seems to portend, that judgments still greater, and of a wider extent, are about to fall on the world. Oh! let us then enter into the sentiments of the first institutor of these days, and with all earnestness entreat the Father of Mercies to avert the anger of his indignation, which our sins have deserved. Notwithstanding the wickedness of the times, the



mercies of God may still be invoked with success. Whole nations have been preserved from the most dreadful scourges, by the prayers of a few humble servants of the crucified Jesus.

Examine yourselves, and see how far you are involved in the wickedness of the times. Extricate yourselves without delay. Satisfy the justice of God, by timely repentance, for the guilt which you yourselves have incurred; and contribute, by your prayers and tears, to avert the judgments which the sins of others have deserved.

## ROGATION-TUESDAY.

### ON THE RULES TO BE OBSERVED IN CONVERSATION.\*

BEFORE we converse with men, it is expedient that we reflect on the rules to be observed in conversation. Unlimited liberty given to the tongue is productive of innumerable evils. If we say too little in conversation, the deficiency may be supplied at a future time;—but if we say too much, the evil consequences are frequently beyond remedy. The pious à Kempis said: “I never converse with men, but I return home a more imperfect man. It is easier not to speak at all, than not to speak too much.”—*Foll. Ch. l. 1. c. 20.*

A guard, therefore, must be placed over the tongue: we must not speak indiscriminately everything that comes into the mind. We must weigh our thoughts before we express them. Everything is not right and just which appears to be so at first sight. The judgment and the imagination are very different from each other. The imagination is a weak faculty, and is easily imposed upon. It is actuated by first impressions: and consequently, it is a very uncertain guide. The judgment alone is a proper guide; because the judgment rectifies the errors of the imagination. But how is this judgment to exercise its powers, except it be by the

means of reflection? And how is reflection to be employed, except time be given? Oh! let us weigh then our words, before we suffer them to escape our lips. Although we may imagine that such or such an expression of our resentment, or that such or such a reproof given to an offending friend, may be productive of good:—although we may imagine that such or such a reflection on the failings of a neighbour, or that the disclosure of such or such secrets, may not be productive of harm, let us not be guided by these imaginary ideas. Let us previously submit all to the decision of our judgment, after mature reflection. Then, if we are led into error, it will be owing more to weakness of judgment, than to criminality of intention.

Examine yourselves, and keep a strict watch over your tongue in conversation. Were you always to speak after reflection, how many quarrels, how many calumnies, how many disagreeable occurrences would be avoided! Be careful for the time to come; and suffer not passion, or sudden impressions, to have undue influence over your words.

### ROGATION-WEDNESDAY.

ON THE RULES TO BE OBSERVED IN SOCIETY, WHEN IMPROPER CONVERSATION IS INTRODUCED BY OTHERS.\*

WE are not only liable to offend in words ourselves, but we may offend by attending to the words of others. It will, sometimes, unavoidably happen, either by necessity or chance, that we enter into mixed company, and that, in this company, disputes will arise, which we cannot prevent; or, that principles of too lax a nature will be defended, which we cannot refute; or, that vanities and follies will be extolled, the senselessness of which we cannot satisfactorily demonstrate; or, that words, hints, or expressions of a certain tendency will be spoken, which we cannot openly approve of, and of

which we cannot publicly, with prudence, express our dislike. To occurrences of this kind we are all occasionally liable: and what ought the pious Christian to do at those times? He ought to retire from such company, when it can be done with prudence: but, when the liberty of retiring is not given, he ought to follow the examples of the saints, who, on such occasions, shut themselves up in the secret closet of their hearts, and conversed with God alone. The following excellent maxim is given by St. John of the Cross: "Whatever you see, whatever you hear in the world, be not scandalized, be not astonished. Endeavour to efface from your recollection everything that has passed, that you may preserve your soul in purity and peace. As long as you live in the society of the world, God does not require that you make reflections on the ways of men, or that you distress yourself about their actions; because it is not left to you to take the cognizance of them. Your great duty is to be employed in the great business of purifying your own soul."—*Berthier Reflex. Spirit*. Oh! let us pay attention to this prudent advice.

Examine what is your usual conduct when in company. Never give encouragement to vice nor to anything that is not strictly proper. Take care, likewise, not to judge or condemn your neighbour, or to store up in your recollection any sentiments of an improper tendency which may be uttered before you. We have enough to condemn in ourselves. It is truly said that the just man is the first to condemn himself, and that he is the last to accuse or condemn others.

## ASCENSION-DAY.

### ON THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD.

THE forty days being expired, wherein our Lord had comforted and instructed his apostles after his resurrection, he leads them forth to mount Olivet, beginning his triumph where

he had begun his passion; where, lifting up his hands and giving them his blessing, “he was carried up into heaven.”—Luke, xxiv. “Lift up your gates ye princes, and the king of glory shall enter in.”—Ps. xxiii. “Sing to God—sing ye to the Lord that mounts upon the heaven of heavens.”—Ps. lxvii. Why do you not say aloud: “The Lamb that was slain, is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction.”—Apoc. v.

Can the child rejoice, when it has lost its father? Are the sheep glad, when the shepherd has left them? We, at least, ought to be so, if we love Christ, and love ourselves. We ought to be glad that Christ has ascended into heaven there to receive the reward of his labours. We ought to rejoice that he is gone before us, because it is to open the gates of heaven for us.

Go, my dear Saviour, leave this earth, which has treated thee so ungratefully. It is not fit that thy pure and immortal body should be in company with sinful creatures. Go, great conqueror, take possession of that kingdom, which, by so many titles, is justly thy own. Take thy captives with thee, to honour thy triumph. Prepare a place for us in thy blissful kingdom. Go, sweet Jesus, and be our advocate: let thy bitter passion plead in our defence—let thy gaping wounds sue for pardon—send thy Holy Spirit to be our guide and comfort in thy absence. Ah! when shall we be freed from this tedious bondage! Oh! *I desire to be dissolved, and to be with thee.*

Examine yourselves, and remember that to triumph with Jesus, you must fight with him. He ascended from mount Olivet, where he sweat blood, to mark out to you the way to glory. You must disengage your hearts from all earthly things, and be daily ascending, in order at length to ascend to happiness.

## FRIDAY AFTER ASCENSION.

ON THE LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE ASCENSION  
OF OUR LORD.\*

WITH what confidence may we now look up to the abodes of Sion! Our Jesus is ascended thither, and from the throne of his glory, he invites us to follow him. Oh! what have we to do with this wretched world! Heaven is our inheritance. It has been purchased for us. It has been bequeathed to us. Our head is there, and there the members ought to be also. We cannot, indeed, during the days of our mortality, soar with him, in effect, to those blessed abodes. We are tied down to the flesh, and as long as that union continues, we must be the inhabitants of this nether world. But we may soar, in thought and affection, to that happy union with our head, and to that possession of our inheritance, which is to be our portion for ever.

Oh! let us, then, ascend in spirit after our Redeemer. Let us fix our conversation in heaven. Let us die to the world, that we may live to God. What are momentary gratifications to us? They are not worthy of our notice. Immortal things alone are worthy of an immortal soul. Let worldlings enjoy their boasted festivities. Let the mammon of the world be eagerly coveted by the children of iniquity. Let the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, engage the attention of the admirers of sensuality. We have higher objects in view. *Poverty of spirit* is more to us, than all these boasted enjoyments; because, by *poverty of spirit*, we shall "possess the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. v. Let us, then, take off our affection from everything here below, and seek only the things that are above.

Examine how your affections are engaged, whether by the things of this world, or by the things of the next. If you

discover that the world has an undue influence over you, turn from it without delay, and be solicitous only for that which will never be taken from you.

## SATURDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION.

### OTHER LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD.\*

WHO are they that shall reign with Christ? They only who walk in his footsteps, by an imitation of his virtues. "Be you perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."—Matt. v. "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ," says St. Paul.—1 Cor. xi. "He has suffered for us," says St. Peter, "leaving you an example that you should walk in his footsteps."—1 Pet. ii. The paths in which our Saviour walked, were not the paths of the world—they were not the paths of pleasure and vanity. They were hard ways—ways strewed with thorns and briars—the narrow way, and the only way that leadeth to life eternal. Had there been other paths—paths easier to flesh and blood, which would have led to the same term, he who came to save mankind would have pointed them out to us: he would not have said unconditionally, "Take up your cross and follow me."—Matt. xvi.

Oh! truly, Christ alone is our way, our truth, and our life. We must be followers of him, or we shall not ascend with him. He suffered, and we must suffer with him. He died and rose again; we must die to sin, and rise to a life of holiness and justice. He ascended above this miserable world, and is now sitting at the right-hand of the Father; we must ascend above this world, by withdrawing our affections from it, and we must fix our conversation in heaven. "If you be risen with Christ," says St. Paul, "seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right-hand of God: mind the things that are above, not the things

that are on the earth; for you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then shall you also appear with him in glory.”—Col. iii.

Examine whether you walk in the footsteps of your Saviour, or in the ways of the world. Henceforward, at least, adhere close to your Jesus, that nothing may separate you from him, either in life or death.

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

### ON TEMPTATION.

“Son, prepare thy soul for temptation.”—Eccl. ii. We are not angles, but men; we must be tempted, or we forfeit our crown. All the saints, who are gone before us, were tempted: even Jesus Christ, the Saint of saints, was not exempted “Man’s life is a warfare upon earth.”—Job. vii. We must fight against the world, and all its suggestions: we must fight against the flesh, and all the efforts of concupiscence: we must overthrow the devil, although he is on the watch night and day, to devour our souls. “Help us, O Lord, or we perish.”—Matt. viii. We carry along with us our greatest enemy. Fight, therefore, in us, and with us, and against us, or we are lost for ever.

Temptation is oftentimes an effect of mercy. God permits it, as fire, to purify our souls. He permits it to humble us; that thereby perceiving our insufficiency, we may acknowledge a necessary dependance on him. He suffers us to be tempted, to try our patience, to improve us in virtue, and to provide us means to merit an eternal crown of glory. Are not these favours? They certainly are. Why then are we discouraged at the sight of temptation?

No: we will resolutely bear up. We will trust in Providence, who will not “suffer us to be tempted above our strength.”—1 Cor. x. Let the devil beset us with his hellish



forces; let the world allure us with its charming baits; let the lascivious stings of concupiscence annoy us: let us be tempted like a Paul, or a Jerome in the wilderness: what need we fear, when God stands by us? Grant us, O Lord, thy supporting grace, without which we shall certainly fall.

Examine yourselves, and, like *valiant soldiers*, *fight the battles of your Lord*. If it be possible, crush the enemy at his first attempt. Turn your thoughts to your crucified Jesus: kiss the foot of the cross, with the penitent Magdalen. Who can sin, when he sees the blood of Christ trickling down before him? Cry aloud: "Lead us not, O Lord, into temptation."—Matt. vi.

## MONDAY—SIXTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

### ON RESISTING TEMPTATION.

ARE we tempted? Let us fly. It is no mark of cowardice, to run away upon these occasions; but, on the contrary, an evident test of the bravest courage. The patriarch Joseph was truly brave, because he had the courage to run away: (Gen. xxxix.) Are we tempted? Let us pray: "Pray, lest ye enter into temptation."—Luke, xxii. It is our Saviour's advice. All succour must come from God, and it is to be obtained by prayer. Are we tempted? If prayer be not sufficient, let us fight. St. Paul prayed, and prayed again, but his request was not granted: it was required that he should fight for his crown of glory. Have we fought like Christians? We can have no reason to fear, when God stands by to encourage us: when he holds a crown over our heads, to reward our conquests.

Let these reflections be our weapons. What! shall I, by sin, lose the grace of God, and make myself the object of his just indignation? Shall I damn myself eternally for the wretched pleasure of a single thought? or of an unchaste



desire? What! shall I, a poor worm, basely rebel against a merciful God? Shall I barbarously trample on the blood of Jesus, which he has so freely spilt for my salvation? No: let the malicious enemy of mankind attack me on all sides, I will rather die than yield to his suggestions.

We must also strive against trivial temptations. Every victory over these petty enemies will be an additional lustre to our crown in heaven. We must vigorously defend ourselves against small assaults, if we mean to be conquerors in greater trials. It may be as great a conquest to overthrow these little, as the most raging enemies, because they are far more numerous.

Examine yourselves, and for your dear soul's sake be careful in opposing all temptations, great and small. In those that are very troublesome, ask the advice of your spiritual director. By frequent examination, take a particular review of the state of your souls. Shun all occasions of sin. In time of temptation, apply yourselves to some pious exercise; that so, the devil, perceiving himself vanquished by his own weapons, may never attempt to insult you any more.

## TUESDAY—SIXTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

### ON TIME.

TIME is precious, because purchased by the blood of Christ. Time is precious, because it is given us to work out our salvation. Each moment of time, we may merit heaven. As many moments, therefore, as we lose, are so many lost eternities. O unhappy loss! Can we be so senseless as to lose this dear time? Can we spend it in vain diversions?—in slothful idleness?—in sin?—in drawing down upon our heads the wrath of God?—in ruining ourselves? Alas! we shall never know the true value of time, until we have entered eternity.

Time is short. What is past, is nothing; it is no more than a dream, or as if it had never been. Time to come is not our own: we cannot promise ourselves a moment of it. Only the present time is at our command, and how quickly does it slide away! The shooting of a star, a ship under sail, the rapidity of a torrent, or a bird on the wing, is not so swift, as are the wings of time. The present time is but a moment: on this moment depends an eternity. And shall we lose it? What would not the souls in hell give for this moment!

Time is irrevocable: it cannot be recalled. The moment, wherein we read this line, is just passing, never, never to return. What shall we do, who have mispent so much? We must redeem it by repentance. God prolongs our life on purpose that we may do it. He gives us time to appease his anger, and make satisfaction to his injured justice. He tells us that, "now is the acceptable time," (2 Cor. vi.) and that, "hereafter there will be no time for us."—Apoc. xx.

Examine yourselves, and see if you make the best use of your time. Make a speedy amends for past losses, by employing it well for the time to come. Remember that time is precious: remember that it is short; and that what you lose, you lose for ever. Let every minute be as religiously husbanded, as if you knew that it was to be the last of your lives.

### WEDNESDAY—SIXTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

#### ON REDEEMING LOST TIME.

WE have been lavish of our time. How shall we retrieve it? By a sorrowful heart for what is past, and by making the best use of the time to come. Were the merchant taught how to recover his lost vessel, what would he not do? And are we not solicitous in retrieving lost time, when we are told the way, and have it in our power to do it? Methinks I hear the repenting groans of the dying sinner: "Oh! that I were

now in the condition in which I was on that day of my life, when I was seriously reflecting on the loss of time! Oh! that I had now the same health and strength! My God, what would not I do? But, alas! it is too late. My neglect of time racks my expiring thoughts." Let this warning awaken us.

Were it revealed to us, that we should die before the end of the next month, I am of opinion we should carefully employ our time: we should carefully spend it in the exercise of good works, and in seeking a reconciliation with our offended God. Let us do so now; for it is uncertain whether we shall live a week, or even a day longer.

We have a God to obey. He commands us to direct every action of our lives to his holy service: and can this be, without a good use of time? We have a soul to save; and can we effect this, without a due employment of time? We have terrible enemies to engage with; and can we defeat them without continual labour? We have a judgment to fear:—it draws nigh; it will be a rigorous one; and have we too much time to prepare for it? Heaven is our last end; and can we mispend those precious moments, which were given for the purchasing it? No: let us redeem the lost time, by a conscientious use of what is to come.

Examine yourselves, and labour all you can in redeeming lost time, that you may not be accountable for it at the day of judgment. Act like the traveller, for we are all such, who, having loitered on his way, doubles his pace, that he may timely arrive at his journey's end.

## THURSDAY—SIXTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

### ON REFLECTING.

WE believe there is a God: we believe that we were created to serve this God: we believe that the number of the elect is very small: we believe that we shall die; and that, the moment

after death, we shall be presented before a terrible tribunal. We believe a hell; and that its eternal flames are for the punishment of the wicked. We believe a heaven; where the good are swallowed up in a sea of bliss. All this we believe: and yet, how comes it, that our lives are so little conformable to what we believe? How comes it, that we sin without scruple, and return, like dogs, to the forbidden vomit? How comes it, that our passions are still untamed, our failings caressed, our devotion cold, and that we make so little progress in a virtuous life? Hear the cause: it is for want of *reflecting*. Ask the souls in hell, how they came into that place of torments? and they will tell you that it was, because they did not *think*. True it is, the "whole earth is become desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart."—Jer. xii.

Where is the person who seriously reflects that, by every mortal sin, he flies in the face of his good God:—that he treads under foot the blood of Jesus:—that he forfeits heaven, becomes a slave to the devil, and liable to his torments; and yet dares to commit a grievous sin? Where is the person, who, justly weighing the wretchedness and inconstancy of a narrow-hearted world, does not despise it? Where is the person, who duly reflects on the kind invitations of his loving Lord, or on the joys of heaven, and is not spurred on to a religious life? Ah! let us reflect.

Happy reflection! thou hast peopled the deserts with pious hermits, and hast filled our convents with penitential Magdalens. Thousands hast thou recalled from their evil ways, when, at other times, the most frightful doctrines, amazing accidents, and most sensible graces, could have no effect.

Examine yourselves, and let not a day pass without seriously reflecting on the truths of eternity: nothing is more conducive to your eternal happiness. The patriarchs, in the old law, were punctual in this duty. David meditated day and night. Let them not outdo you, who live under the law of grace, sealed by the blood of your dying Lord.

## FRIDAY—SIXTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

## ON THE SHORTNESS OF HUMAN LIFE.

“Man’s days are short,” (Job xiv.): we must leave behind us what we possess and see. And do we seriously reflect upon it? In a little time, we shall be summoned to appear before a dreadful judge. Are our accounts ready? We shall die very shortly; and is it not strange that we think so little of it? Let us not rely on the advantage of *youth*: thousands and thousands have been cut off in that age. Let us not depend on a good constitution; for the strongest bodied men have been surprised by death.

*Life is very short.* How many are strangled in their mother’s womb! How many overlaid in their tender infancy! How many cut off in their riper years! Daily experience makes it appear that many more die before thirty than live to that age. But suppose that we allow fourscore years; is not man’s life still very short? One half of it is absolutely lost, namely, that of our infancy and childhood, and that which is lost in sleep, and in uneasy old age. Take the best part of our lives. All that is past is no more than a dream: the *present* remains but a moment, and what is it? By some it is spent in laborious employments, in restless projects; by others in vanity, excess, and sin. By many it is spent in anger and vexation; by others in anguish, grief, and tears. A sad life, and very short.

A drop of water in respect to the sea, a spot of ground in comparison to the earth, is more than life when compared to eternity. Hear the judgment of the damned, on the shortness of human life: (Wisd.v.) “What has pride profited us? or the boasting of riches, what has it brought us? All these things have passed by, like a shadow, and as a ship on the floating waters, as a bird on the wing, or an arrow sent

to its destined place: so we born, soon cease to be." Are not our thoughts the same? Who will barter an eternal weight of glory for the transitory things of this short life?

Examine yourselves, and remember that your lives are short, and very short. Let this be a motive to you to fix your hearts on that eternal life for which you were created—a life which is the happiness of saints and angels.

### WHITSUN-EVE.

#### ON PREPARING FOR THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.\*

FROM the time of the ascension of our Lord, the apostles "persevered, with one mind in prayer," (Acts, i.) to prepare themselves for the coming of the Holy Ghost. "They were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God."—Luke, xxiv. How necessary it is to prepare ourselves, by retirement and prayer, for the annual commemoration of this solemn festival!

The apostles spent ten days in retirement. They thought no more of their ships and nets. They abandoned all for the love of their Master; and, with hearts undefiled with worldly desires, they waited, with eager expectation, the coming of the Paraclete, who was to abide with them for ever. Alas! what are our desires? Are they worldly, or are they spiritual? Are we ready to quit, for a time at least, the ships and nets of earthly pursuits, and, with eager expectation, to await the coming of the divine Spirit? Or, are we so entangled in the snares of vanity as to feel no solicitude for the enlivening presence of him in whom all good things are to be found? Oh! the spirit of God is as necessary for us as he was for the apostles; and the same means of inviting him into our souls must be adopted by us as by them.

Let us, then, retire, for a time, from the hurry and distractions of a busy world. Let us enter into the secret closets of

our hearts. Let us commune with our God, in silent prayer. Let us meditate on his holy law. Let us entertain a holy hunger and thirst for the possession of the divine spirit. Let us be convinced that, without that holy Spirit, *nothing can have any price or worth in man*, and that *nothing can harmless be*. Such desires, such endeavours as these, will infallibly bring him into our souls, and, with him, all those gifts which are to prepare us for the possession of him hereafter.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved to employ every means in your power to invite the Holy Ghost to come into your souls and to take up his abode with you. Remember that your heavenly Father has promised "to give his Holy Spirit to all who ask him."—Luke, xi. Ask with all humility and earnestness, and you shall receive.

## WHIT-SUNDAY.

### ON THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

"WHEN the day of Pentecost was come, the disciples were all in one place; and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting: and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, as it were of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."—Acts. ii. The Holy Ghost is a Spirit of life that animates us, a Spirit of wisdom instructing us, and a Spirit of love uniting us to God. He is a Spirit of peace which calms our passions; a Spirit of purity, purifying our souls; and a Spirit of comfort to our afflicted hearts. Do we live by this Spirit? Are we quickened by it? Or rather, are we not governed by the spirit of the world, the flesh, and Satan?

Blessed Jesus, thou hast died for us, and is not that enough? Must thou send the Holy Ghost to lodge within our breasts? Christians, it is necessary: the work of our redemption cannot

be complete without it. How many sinners has the Holy Ghost justified by his grace? How many weak has he strengthened? How many sorrowful has he comforted? How many ignorant has he enlightened? How many proud has he humbled? How many tepid has he inspired with a holy fervour? Let the apostles, martyrs, virgins, and confessors, let all the saints who are gone before us, give testimony to it.

We are undone if the Holy Ghost warms not our breasts with his divine flames: we shall certainly sink under the weight of our misfortunes: we shall be overcome by the world, vanity, and self-love: we shall sin without remorse, and die in our sins. *Come, O Holy Ghost, replenish the hearts of the faithful, and kindle in them the fire of thy love.*

Examine yourselves, and since you are not capable of taking a step towards heaven, unless influenced by the Holy Spirit, earnestly pray for his holy grace. Beg of him so to enliven your faith that, in every particular, you may live up to your belief. Beg of him to strengthen your hope, that you may never be confounded. Beg of him to increase your love: he is able to do it, for he is all love—he is the eternal love of the Father and the Son.

## WHIT-MONDAY.

### ON THE EFFECTS OF THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

No sooner had the Holy Ghost shed his beams upon the hundred and twenty disciples who were assembled together in holy prayer, than they were all filled with a *burning charity*: their love of God was as strong as death: their love of their neighbour could not be confined; it must spread itself over the whole world. Is our charity such? O best comforter! sweet guest of the soul! come, and refresh our dull hearts.

Great was the zeal of these pious disciples on their receiv-



ing the Holy Ghost. They could not stay, but must forthwith carry their Master's praises into every corner of the earth.

Is it not amazing that a few poor persons, without credit, force, or eloquence, should convince the best philosophers of the truth of what they taught?—that they should bring the infidel world, great and little, to believe and profess that a *poor man*, crucified on a cross, was their great God? But what could they not do, when directed by the light of the Holy Ghost?

Great, likewise, was the courage, which the Holy Ghost infused into the disciples. They who, not long before, were so very cowardly, as to abandon their Lord, are now prepared to expose themselves to the most threatening dangers. Fearless of torments, they are ready to undergo the severest of them, and to seal their doctrine with their blood. Do we partake of this courage? Are we not rather impatient under the least contradiction, and presently dejected at every ordinary calamity?

Examine yourselves, and prepare for receiving the charity, zeal, and courage, which the Holy Ghost gave to the disciples on the day of Pentecost. You must prepare yourselves for his coming as they did, that is, by an union of hearts, by retiring from the world, and by perseverance in prayer. Come, kind comforter of our afflicted souls, enlighten them with thy flames, govern them by thy wisdom, sanctify them by thy love, animate them with thy grace, and save them by thy mercy.

## WHIT-TUESDAY.

ON THE EFFECTS PRODUCED IN THE APOSTLES BY THE DESCENT  
OF THE HOLY GHOST.\*

THE Holy Ghost descended on the apostles, and instantly they became new men. The promises of our Saviour were fulfilled,

and the *Paraclete*, or the *Comforter*, verified to the letter the import of his holy name. The apostles immediately comprehended the nature of the ministry to which they were appointed. The ideas of a *temporal* kingdom in Israel, on which their longing expectations had hitherto been fixed, were absorbed in the immense prospect of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, which, by their preaching, was to be established over the whole world. Their timidity was dissipated. They preached boldly and publicly the gospel of Christ crucified. They feared no dangers. They rejoiced to be found worthy to suffer reproach and torments for the name of Jesus. Their ignorance was enlightened. All knowledge was imparted to them by the spirit of God. Rude and illiterate, as they had hitherto been, by their preachings they confounded the wisdom both of Jews and Gentiles. They overturned all the learned systems of the most eminent philosophers, and established over the universe a system of morality, subversive indeed of human pride and sensual pleasures, but a system the most perfect, and the most sublime. How wonderful are the effects, which may be produced in the soul by the Spirit of God!

We, like the apostles, have been taught in the school of Christ. We have learnt his doctrines, and we believe in them. But, has the Spirit of God produced in our souls the same effects as he did in the apostles? Are we determined to proclaim the truth, and to follow it, were even scoffs, calumnies, or persecutions, to be the consequence? Or, are we timid in professing our religion, and observing its precepts in the presence of unbelievers? Are we wedded to the world, and to the riches and pleasures of the world? Or, are we rigid followers of that perfect and sublime system of morality, which the Spirit of God enabled the apostles to follow? Do we preach the gospel, and make additions to the spiritual kingdom of Christ, by the odour of good example?

Examine yourselves on these subjects. To learn in the

school of Jesus, will not profit you, unless you are animated with his Holy Spirit. The spirit of godliness, or piety, must be united with the spirit of knowledge. For, “were you to know all mysteries, and have not charity, it would profit you nothing.”—1 Cor. xiii.

## WEDNESDAY IN WHITSUN-WEEK.

### ON THE EMBER-DAYS.\*

IN the midst of the solemnities of this week, we are commanded by the church to fast. Her motives are good. We are commemorating the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the first pastors of the church, whereby they received grace and strength to perform the important duties of their ministry. It is fitting therefore, that this should be appointed as a season for ordaining successors to them; and it is fitting that the whole body of the faithful should be enjoined to fast and pray, that the Holy Spirit would likewise descend on them, and prepare them for the state to which they are chosen. Oh! what a blessing to the church is an able and pious ministry! How much does the salvation of souls depend on the zeal of pastors! What inducements are there to the faithful, to endeavour, by prayer and penance, to prevail on the Almighty disposer to send amongst them men according to his own heart—men endowed with all virtue and wisdom—men, worthy to be called the successors of the apostles! How great is the need of such men, in these times of infidelity and depravity!

The *ember-weeks* were appointed in the early times of the church. One week, in each quarter of the year, was devoted to prayer and penance, for the purpose, not only of obtaining good pastors, but of invoking the blessings of God on the fruits of the earth. How proper, that we should religiously observe this ember-week, for these purposes! On Whitsunday,

the Jews presented in the temple sheaves of new wheat. We cannot do the same in this country. But this is a critical time for the fruits of the earth. Much depends on the favour of the season, or rather, on the blessing of the great director of the seasons. How much, therefore, is it our interest to endeavour, by prayer and penance, to render Him propitious, on whom we depend for every good gift.

Examine whether you duly attend to the obligations of this time. Your temporal and eternal interests are concerned. Your temporal, in the fruitful produce of the earth: your eternal, in the raising up of good and faithful pastors. Fast and pray, therefore, that these blessings may be conferred on you, and on all the faithful throughout the world.

## THURSDAY IN WHITSUN-WEEK.

### ON THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST.\*

GIFTS of an extraordinary nature were conferred on the apostles by the Holy Ghost. They were empowered to speak in divers tongues, and to work all kinds of miracles. These gifts were necessary in the first establishment of the new law, in order to prove to men that the apostles were truly the envoys of God, and were acting in the name of him, to whose will all nature was subject.

These signs and wonders are no longer necessary. The world has acknowledged the divinity of the crucified Jesus. The gifts, therefore, which the Spirit of God confers on the soul in these times, are not extraordinary powers, but interior gifts, gifts adapted to her spiritual wants, and calculated to advance her in the ways of virtue. These gifts are enumerated by the prophet Isaiah, (xi. 2.) and they were conferred, together with the other gifts, on the apostles. First: The gift of *the fear of the Lord*, to restrain her from sin. Second: The gift of *godliness*, or *piety*, to make her in

love with the ways of God. Third: The gift of *knowledge*, to instruct her in all her duties. Fourth: The gift of *fortitude*, to enable her to fight manfully against her spiritual enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh. Fifth: The gift of *counsel*, to enlighten her mind to discover the snares and artifices of the wicked one, and to preserve her from the two fatal extremes—*superstition*, and *indifference*. Sixth: The gift of *understanding*, by means of which her eyes are opened to behold this world in the only light in which it ought to be beheld, namely, as a place of exile, where the only happiness to be enjoyed is the testimony of a good conscience, and the cheering hope of being prepared to enjoy the good things of the Lord in the land of the living. Seventh: The gift of *wisdom*, that sublime and heavenly wisdom, by which she is taught to love God above all things, to tend continually towards him, and to seek and find him in all the various occurrences of life.

These are the gifts, which the Holy Ghost is ready to infuse into the soul. Oh! that we were made partakers of them in their utmost perfection.

Examine into the state of your souls, and see what traces you can discover there of having received these heavenly gifts. If the traces are only faint, your interest requires that you should apply with all earnestness to the Holy Spirit for the full possession of them. He will not refuse to listen to your humble requests.

## FRIDAY IN WHITSUN-WEEK.

ON THE MARKS OF THE HOLY GHOST RESIDING IN THE SOUL.\*

HUMILITY is always the reigning virtue in the soul, in which the Holy Spirit has taken up his abode. By humility we are taught to know ourselves, namely, that we are nothing—that we know nothing—and that we can do nothing without God.

As pride is the source of all our evil, so humility is the beginning of all our good, the foundation, on which the edifice of Christian piety is built. Consequently, where the Holy Ghost resides, there is true humility to be found.

The Spirit of God is likewise the spirit of love. We cannot possess the one, without possessing the other. The spirit of love instils into the soul a sovereign hatred of sin, and of everything that is opposed to the will of God. The spirit of love withdraws the affections from perishable things, and fixes them on the enjoyments of him, who is her only beloved. The spirit of love possesses the whole soul, and causes her to love no person or thing, but in God, and for God. The spirit of love never lies idle. It is like a fire, always tending upwards, and always endeavouring to extend its power, and increase its force.

Do we feel the spirit of love in our souls? Let us not flatter ourselves with delusive appearances. The fruits of the Holy Ghost are likewise the fruits of the spirit of love. The soul that truly loves, possesses "charity, joy, peace, patience, longanimity, goodness, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity."—Gal. v. Do we perceive these fruits in our souls? If we do, we may truly say that we have the spirit of love, and consequently, that we have the Spirit of God residing within us.

Examine carefully, by these marks, whether you possess the Spirit of God or not. If you seem to feel these marks of his presence, return him humble thanks. But be not too secure, lest the artifices of self-love should deceive you, or the spirit of pride drive him away.

## SATURDAY IN WHITSUN-WEEK.

### ON THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION.\*

IN the Sacrament of Confirmation we receive the Holy Ghost into our souls, as the apostles received him on the day of

Pentecost. Oh! what blessings will not this Holy Spirit bring with him! How truly were the apostles changed into new men! How wonderful were the effects produced in the minds of the first Christians, when, by the imposition of the hands of the apostles, he descended upon them! Let us labour, that the same effects may be produced in our souls. Let us prepare ourselves for this holy sacrament with earnestness. Let us enter into the sentiments of the apostles, and fix our hearts on Jesus alone. Let the vanities and pleasures of the world be banished from our affections, and let the world itself be removed from a place in our esteem. Let the will of God be the sole rule of our actions: and let the salvation of our souls be the only object of our solicitude. Animated with these dispositions, the Spirit of God will descend upon us in the Sacrament of Confirmation, and by his influence he will make us truly the soldiers of Jesus Christ, ready to profess our faith before tyrants, whether these tyrants be the rulers of the world, the pleasures of the world, or the insinuating suggestions of the flesh.

If, however, we have already received this sacrament, let us examine whether or not these effects have been produced in our souls. We then ratified the promises made in our name at baptism, and engaged to “renounce the devil with all his works, the world with all its pomps, the flesh with all its temptations.” Have we complied with these engagements? Can we say that “the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life,” have no part in us? Have we been truly “reformed in the newness of our mind?”—Rom. xii. If we can give this flattering account of ourselves, can we go farther, and say, that we have continued to correspond with the grace that we then received? Or, have we been like to those, “who believed for a while, and in time of temptation fell away?”—Luke, viii.

Examine yourselves carefully on these points. If you have received confirmation, and have fallen away from your first

fervour, invite the Holy Ghost to come again into your souls, by a *spiritual* confirmation, as it were; and be more faithful to his graces for the time to come.

## TRINITY-SUNDAY.

### ON THE BLESSED TRINITY.

I BELIEVE that in the Trinity there is one God, and three distinct persons; to wit, the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God: and yet, there are not three Gods, but only one God. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are equal in power, majesty, and glory. God the Father is from eternity, uncreated, immense, omnipotent: so is God the Son: so likewise is God the Holy Ghost. The Father has no beginning: the Son is begotten of the Father: and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. This is my faith of the blessed Trinity, in which I am resolved to die. “There are three that give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One.”—1 John, v. “Go, teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”—Matt. xxviii.

O adorable Trinity! although our weak understanding is not able to fathom the depth of this mystery, yet we joyfully submit to believe what thou hast taught us. We detest *Arius* and *Macedonius*, and all their deluded followers, who disbelieve these truths. Alas! thou wouldst not be our God, were human reason able to comprehend thee. We adore thee, O blessed Trinity: our lives shall ever express thy praisies. Glory be to the Father, who, out of his mere goodness, has created us: glory be to the Son, who has mercifully redeemed us: glory be to the Holy Ghost, who heals our souls.

Christians, have we not been backward in paying our homage to the most blessed Trinity? Have we not renounced



the belief of it, by a life of sin? We do not believe, as we ought, in an *Almighty* God, when we dare offend him: we do not believe, as we ought, in a *wise* God, when we murmur against his providence: nor do we believe, as we ought, in a *pure* God, when we abandon our hearts to sinful pleasures. Have we not thus renounced the faith of the blessed Trinity? Examine yourselves, and henceforward settle in your souls a lasting devotion to the blessed Trinity. As often as you say the *Glory be to the Father*, &c., or make the sign of the cross, raise up your hearts by lively acts of faith, hope, and love. Never think nor speak of this mystery, but with the profoundest adoration.

## MONDAY AFTER TRINITY SUNDAY.

### ON SACRIFICE.\*

FROM the beginning of the world, sacrifice was offered to God; and from the time that a public form of worship to God was appointed, sacrifice constituted the most essential part. Cain and Abel offered sacrifice. Noah offered sacrifice. Abraham and Melchisedech offered sacrifice. The paschal lamb was commanded by God to be sacrificed by the children of Israel, previous to their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt; and ordained to be observed as a perpetual remembrance. And, when the law was given to Moses on Mount Sinai, a variety of sacrifices was prescribed by the Almighty, to be offered up by the children of promise, and to be continued, in regular order, as long as the law should endure.

These sacrifices, however, were only figures of that great sacrifice which the Son of God was to offer up, in his own person, for the redemption of mankind. Although they formed the principal part of divine worship, they were no otherwise acceptable in the sight of God, than as they were sanctified by faith in him, who was to be both our High-Priest and Victim. For, what was the blood of oxen and

goats? "It was impossible that, by their blood, sin should be taken away."—Heb. x. It was necessary that He, who was to come, should come, and that "the blood of Christ, who, through the Holy Ghost, offered himself without spot to God," should "cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God;" and that he should become "the Mediator of the New Testament, that, by means of his death, for the remission of those transgressions, which were under the former testament, they, that are called, may receive the promise of eternal inheritance."—Heb. ix.

This, therefore, is the great sacrifice, by the merits of which all other sacrifices, from the beginning of the world, have found acceptance with God. This is the sovereign act of religious worship, which is due to God alone, and by which we present to our Creator, in the daily sacrifice of the Mass, the most agreeable tribute of homage and adoration, the most powerful atonement for sin, and the most effectual means of obtaining all graces and blessings, which it is possible for a creature and a sinner to offer. Oh! what a treasure have we in this adorable sacrifice!

Examine what are the dispositions with which you assist at the sacrifice of the new law—the sacrifice of the Mass. If the Jews were struck with religious awe, when they assisted at the bloody sacrifices of beasts, with what awe and veneration ought you to assist at a sacrifice, in which your Lord himself is both the High-priest and the Victim.

## TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY-SUNDAY.

ON THE SACRIFICE OF THE PASCHAL LAMB IN THE OLD LAW  
AS A FIGURE OF THE CHRISTIAN SACRIFICE.\*

In the old law, the annual sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb was appointed, to commemorate the liberation of the chosen people of God from the bondage of Egypt. But, what virtue was there in the sacrifice of a lamb? Was there anything

that could make atonement for sin? or that had the least connection with the thing signified? A lamb is the emblem of innocence: and could the sacrifice of the emblem of innocence represent liberation from bondage? No: it was intended as a figure of that Lamb, which, in after times, was to be slain, and by whose blood the whole world was to be delivered from sin, and from the slavery of the devil.

The Israelites were commanded to eat the lamb. But, what connection had this with their deliverance? The reason of the ordinance was no other, than that it should be a figure of what was to come. The Lamb of God was not only to be sacrificed, but he was to be eaten by his chosen people. He was to be their spiritual food. He was to be meat indeed to their souls. He was, by means of this union, to conduct them through the desert of this world, and bring them to the land of promise—the eternal Sion.

The Israelites were to eat the lamb with unleavened bread and wild lettuce, and with staves in their hands. These injunctions, likewise, were figurative, denoting the dispositions of mind with which the true Lamb was to be eaten by the faithful under the new law:—the “unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,” (1 Cor. v.)—the *wild*, or *bitter lettuce* of mortification and penance:—and the determination of walking resolutely forward in the ways of *newness of life*, signified by the staves in their hands. Oh! how perfectly do all the circumstances of the paschal sacrifice prefigure the most remarkable institution of the new law—the sacrifice and sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist.

Examine whether you partake, in due manner, of the blessings of this institution. Oh! be no longer in love with “the leaven of malice and wickedness,” (1 Cor. v.): but, with “your loins girt, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,” (Eph. vi.) nourish your souls with that “bread from heaven, of which whoever eats shall live eternally.”—John, vi.

## WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY-SUNDAY.

ON THE SACRIFICE OF MELCHISEDECH AS A FIGURE OF THE  
CHRISTIAN SACRIFICE.\*

THE royal prophet proclaimed that the Redeemer to come should be a "priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech."—Ps. cx. Why this particular designation? Was he not priest according to the order of Aaron? for the sacrifices of Aaron were prefigurative of his great sacrifice on the cross. Was he not priest according to the order of Moses? for the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, ordained and offered by the ministry of Moses, was a special figure of his sacrifice. Truly our Lord was a priest according to both these orders. Why then are they not specified? Because the sacrifices of Moses and Aaron prefigured only the *bloody* sacrifice of our Saviour of the cross, which was offered up but once: whereas the sacrifice of Melchisedech offered in bread and wine, prefigured that perpetual *unbloody* sacrifice, which was to be "offered up among the Gentiles from the rising of the sun to the setting thereof;" (Mal. i.) and consequently, according to the order of Melchisedech alone could he be called a priest *for ever*.

Oh! how well does the person of the King of Salem and his sacrifice, agree with the person of our Lord, and with the sacrifice of the new law! "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but likened unto the Son of God, he continueth a priest for ever."—Heb. vii. His sacrifice was *bread and wine*: the elements of the perpetual sacrifice of the new law are also *bread and wine*. He himself offered sacrifice only once: our Saviour offered the sacrifice of himself on the cross only once: but, under the form of "bread and wine, according to the

order of Melchisedech," he is offering up the continuation of his own great sacrifice, "from the rising of the sun to the setting thereof." His sacrifice never ceases. Spread as is the religion of Jesus over the whole universe, there is not an hour either of the day or night, in which this clean oblation is not offered up for the sins of men. Truly is our Lord "a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech."—Heb. vii.

Examine what are your sentiments of gratitude to God for this his infinite mercy. He made his promises, that Jesus should be to you "a priest for ever;" and he confirmed his promise with an oath: "the Lord hath sworn, and he will not repent: thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech."—Ps. cx. Oh! testify your gratitude by assisting at this holy sacrifice as frequently as you can, and with the most ardent sentiments of piety and love.

## CORPUS CHRISTI.

### ON THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

"JESUS took bread, and blessed, and brake, and gave to his disciples; and said, take ye and eat: *This is my Body*. And taking the chalice, he gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: *Drink ye all of this; for this is my Blood of the new testament*."—Matt. xxvi. When was it that Christ gave us his body and blood? At that very time, when men and devils were caballing to lay upon him all the torments that cruelty could invent. Where did he give us his body and blood? In that very place where he had been barbarously persecuted for above thirty years. To whom did he give his body and blood? To us sinners, and to those very Jews who basely murdered him. Was there ever love like this?

Dearest Jesus, every passage of thy life discovers to us thy excessive love: but here it seems to exceed all bounds. Ah!

true it is that thou hast "loved us to the end," (John, xiii.) and with a love that none but a God could give. What return shall we make? Alas! our hearts are too little for thee. Why didst thou not stay thy hand, kindest Redeemer, till the world had been better prepared to receive thee? Didst thou not see how thy own children were contriving to murder thee? Didst thou not foresee how many would procure their own destruction by an unworthy participation of thy blood in the Eucharist? Didst thou not foresee the great numbers who, by denying this mystery, would give the lie to thy eternal word? Yes, thou didst. But the excess of thy love could not be contained. Oh! may we never prove ungrateful.

Go, my soul, embrace thy Saviour, covered with the veils of bread and wine. Humble thyself, since he has humbled himself so much for thee. By a stratagem of love he has found out a means of always abiding with thee: run then to him, and with a heart full of joy, love, and gratitude, fail not to incorporate thyself with him.

Examine yourselves, and, particularly on this day, give thanks to Jesus that he has given himself to you, to be your food. Resolve never to be so ungrateful as to offend him any more. Often approach to him in the holy sacrament; but see it be with a heart full of love, humility, purity, sorrow, thanksgiving, and a lively faith.

## FRIDAY AFTER CORPUS CHRISTI.

### ON THE MASS.

ABEL offered to God the first begotten of his flock; and his offering proved acceptable. Abraham, Moses, David offered sacrifice, and it was grateful to heaven. Yet, all the burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, or peace-offerings, all the sacrifices of the law of nature or Moses, were but shadows to our august sacrifice. If a sacrifice takes its value from the offerer, and

the victim offered, how glorious must that of the Mass be, wherein Jesus Christ is both priest and victim? True it is, "in every place there is offered to my name a clean oblation." —Mal. i.

We are all God's creatures. He justly challenges our love and adoration. Let us, therefore, make a tender of them in this sacrifice of *adoration*; since all the praises of the saints and angels in heaven do not so much contribute to his glory. Have we sinned? Have we reason to apprehend that there is a heavy debt of satisfaction due to our sins? We have here a sacrifice of *propitiation*, and we need desire no more. Let all mankind suffer till the end of the world, let their sufferings exceed the most dreadful racks of martyrs, or haircloth of confessors, all is nothing to one Mass, wherein we have a God atoning for us. Ah! how great a comfort must it be to a faithful soul to have so ample a subject of satisfaction.

We are infinitely obliged to make a return of thanks to God for his numerous blessings: but, poor and helpless as we are, we should be absolutely incapable of it, were it not for this sacrifice of *thanksgiving*, whereby we are enabled to make a worthy return of a present worthy of God, that is, the precious body of the Son of God. If Christ has said, "Ask, and you shall receive," (John, xvi,) can he refuse us anything in this sacrifice of *impetration*, where his own sacred self cries aloud for mercy? No: our petitions must be granted.

Examine yourselves, and devoutly offer up the Mass for these four ends. Let not a neglect of this great means of salvation rise in judgment against you. Were the Mass to be celebrated but in one place in this kingdom, how desirous should we be to hear it? And ought we to be less solicitous, because we have a daily opportunity of assisting at it?

## SATURDAY AFTER CORPUS CHRISTI.

## ON HEARING MASS.

WE often hear Mass, and, it is much to be feared, with very little benefit. Is it not strange that any person should be so rude as to assist thereat in a careless manner, either lolling, sleeping, prattling, gazing about, or negligently distracted? And yet, how many thus comport themselves. No, this is not the way to offer a sacrifice of *adoration*: this cannot be a likely means of obtaining favours from heaven. Is this our behaviour in the presence of a God, in whose sight the angels are not pure and the pillars of heaven tremble? Is this our carriage at that very time when the divine goodness offers himself, a victim, for our sins, and gives us the greatest marks of mercy? Ah! let it not be said. Let us not draw on ourselves, by these unchristian doings, the curse of God in lieu of mercy.

To hear Mass well, it must be with *attention*, *respect*, and *devotion*:—with *attention*, by fixing the mind on the mysteries and ceremonies;—with *respect*, in being present with an exterior modesty, and interior reverence of the soul;—with *devotion*, by stirring up in our minds different acts of virtue.

Christians, behold in this mystery, Christ your Lord offering himself a sacrifice to his Father for your sins. Behold him in a state of humility and penance, clothed with the appearances of bread and wine, as with sackcloth and ashes, for your sins. Behold him an advocate before his eternal Father for your sins. Let us follow his example; let us sacrifice our hearts entirely to him; let us do penance and embrace humility; let us pray for all, even our most professed enemies.

Examine yourselves, and be careful to assist at this divine sacrifice with a religious *attention*, *respect*, and *devotion*. Let your first object be, to offer it up jointly with the priest; and



then go on with him through the different parts thereof. There cannot be a more effectual means of avoiding distractions, of nourishing devotion, and consequently, of receiving the happy fruits of this divine sacrifice.

## SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

### ON THE BLESSED EUCHARIST.

So great is the mercy, which shines forth to us in this mystery, that no one, but the God who most lovingly gives it, knows its worth. Here is the most sacred *body* and *blood* of Jesus Christ, which heaven adores, and which makes up the bliss of the saints and angels; here is Christ's glorious soul, his humanity, his divinity; here, likewise, by *accompaniment*, is the Father, the Holy Ghost, the whole blessed Trinity. What! has the Word Eternal thus annihilated himself for us sinners! He became incarnate for us in the womb of a poor Virgin: he died for us. And is not this enough? Must he deliver himself up a perpetual sacrifice for sinners? Must his immaculate body be handled by sinners? Must he enter the corrupted hearts of sinners? What can his love do more!

Let us adore his boundless mercy in giving us himself to be our food. Let us return a hearty thanksgiving for this last effort of an infinite love. "There is no nation under the sun so blessed as we," (Deut. iv.) to have our God in the midst of us! to carry our Jesus personally in our breasts! to be incorporated with him! What can we think?

My soul, dost thou labour under a dangerous leprosy? Repent: present thyself: the blood of Jesus is able to heal thee. Art thou *deaf*, *dumb*, or *blind* in spirit? The blood of Jesus will restore thy senses. Art thou *dead* in mortal sin? Confess, and repent; then receive the body of Jesus: it will strengthen thee to life. Art thou buried in vicious habits?

Despair not, but cry aloud: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."—Luke xviii.

Examine yourselves, and conclude with this address: "O Jesus, I do firmly believe that thou art truly present in the sacrament of the altar: how can I doubt it, when I know that 'thou hast the words of eternal life?'—John vi. In thee I place all my hope and confidence. How can I despair, when thou hast favoured me with so signal a mark of mercy! I love thee with my whole heart. How can I do otherwise, when thou hast loved me to that excess, as to nourish my soul with thy own dear self!"

## MONDAY AFTER CORPUS CHRISTI.

ON CHRIST INVITING US TO HIMSELF IN THE EUCHARIST.

DAUGHTERS of Jerusalem, how long shall I stay? Why do you not draw nearer to me, when I am languishing with love, and with love for you? I came down from heaven to converse with you, and to dwell within your hearts. I have transformed myself into the shape of *bread*, to be your nourishment. I desire to be one with you, as my Father and I are one. And are you afraid to approach me? "I am the bread of heaven: he that eats of this bread shall live for ever."—John vi. And will you keep away, under a vain pretence of being too familiar?

Never did you meet with so true a lover. I offer you my blood, to heal your wounds. I give you my flesh, to strengthen you in grace. Everybody has free access to me—the sick to be healed—the feeble to be strengthened—the blind to see—the deaf to hear—the sorrowful to be comforted—the slothful to be spurred on—the sinner to be more justified. And can you think yourselves unworthy? Will you, under that ungrateful cover, slight my love?

Ah! my soul, give ear to this sweet call of thy dear Redeemer: earnestly embrace this amorous invitation of thy loving Jesus. Go, and see how sweet is the Lord, and how charming a delight to those who love him. He is the beauty of angels; he is the happiness of the saints; he is all love. In him are locked up all the treasures of nature, grace, and glory. O dear Jesus, I do attend to thy most loving invitation: I will most thankfully accept of it. But, what return shall I make for so great a favour? I have only my poor heart to give thee. Take it, then, dear Lord, and purify it with thy love, that it may be eternally united to thee in this sacrament of love.

Examine yourselves, and receive your loving Jesus into your breasts; but let it be with the profoundest humility, with a contrite heart, with an inflamed love, and with hearty thanksgiving for so unspeakable a favour. Give yourselves entirely to him, who has been so kind as to give his whole self to you.

## TUESDAY AFTER CORPUS CHRISTI.

### ON FREQUENT COMMUNION.

WE cannot live without corporal food; it is that which nourishes and maintains our lives. We must take it often, or nature will decay. So, likewise, must we take the food of the soul—the holy sacrament. It is our daily bread: the welfare of our souls depends upon it: “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye shall not have life in you.”—John, vi.

Did we reflect on the perverseness of our hearts, and the great danger we are in of being overcome by sin, we should soon be convinced of the necessity of receiving this supporting sacrament. Did we seriously consider our backwardness in virtue, and our little concern about a happy eternity, we

should soon be made sensible of the need we have of this enlivening sacrament? Why then do we not receive it? Is once a fortnight, three weeks, or a month too often? The saints did not think so. For shame, let not the primitive Christians, who communicated every day, rise up in judgment against us, and condemn our neglect—our ungrateful neglect.

Perhaps, it is our humility, or our great unworthiness, that keeps us at such a distance from our good God. This must be a false pretence, since Jesus Christ has called, has commanded, has pressed us to his banquet. Surely, we do not think ourselves unworthy of being cured of our wounds, in order to enter heaven. Let us, likewise, not pretend *fear*, when our dearest Lord, with stretched out arms, is ready to receive us. We have reason indeed, to fear hell, but we have no reason to fear being delivered from it.

Examine yourselves, and let neither slothfulness, nor any excuse put you off from frequenting the holy sacrament. Fail not, to communicate, at least, every month. The eternal welfare of your souls, love, gratitude, and a thousand other motives call you to it.

## WEDNESDAY AFTER CORPUS CHRISTI.

### ON PREPARATION FOR COMMUNION.

WHO is it that we receive in the Holy Communion? It is an Almighty God, in whose sight the angels are not pure; in whose presence the pillars of heaven tremble. Who are we that receive him? We are poor helpless worms, by sin worse than nothing. Why will this great God stoop so low? For no other reason but to heal our souls. And can we think any pains too great, any time too long, to make the best preparation for so noble a guest? Suppose we had notice that our sovereign intended to honour us with his

presence this very night: what preparations should we not make? Would not the house ring with the report? Would not all unbecoming rubbish be put out of the way? Should we not make use of the richest furniture, and set everything off to the best advantage? And, after all, should we not think that all we had done was not sufficient for so great a guest? Now, the truth is, the King of heaven and earth comes to take up his lodging with us; and shall we give him a cool reception? Where is the rich furniture of virtues? of purity, love, gratitude, and humility? Ah! my soul, remember that thou art upon “a great work: thou art preparing a habitation, not for man, but God.”—1 Chron. xxix.

The most eminent saints always made the most attentive preparation, as often as they were about to go to communion: and shall we, sinners, dare to receive it, without a serious application of our best endeavours? Will a prayer or two, run over in haste and without reflection, suffice for so great a work? Alas! it is no wonder that we receive so little benefit from this sacrament; it is well if we do not, by these unwarrantable doings, eat and drink our damnation.

Examine yourselves, and, by acts of faith, love, sorrow, and humility—by acts of hope, gratitude, and resignation, prepare yourselves to receive your Lord. Cry aloud, with the centurion, “Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof; speak but the word, and my soul shall be healed.”—Matt. viii. Say, with St. Elizabeth, “How comes it that the Son of God vouchsafes to visit me.”—Luke, i.

## THURSDAY—THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

### ON AN UNWORTHY COMMUNION.

JUDAS committed a great sin in betraying his Master, and he is damned for it. The Jews sinned grievously in crucifying

their Messiah; and, in punishment thereof, they are forsaken, their posterity destroyed, and the small remnant of them become vagabonds upon the earth. And yet, let me tell you, that neither the treachery of Judas, nor the barbarity of the Jews, do far exceed the horrid sacrilege of the unworthy communicant. True it is, "he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord."—1 Cor. xi.

Unhappy sinners! what are you doing? Can you think of admitting the *ark* and *Dagon*—God and the devil—into your breasts together? Will you, by this sacrilege, crucify again, as far as in you lies, your blessed Lord? If Oza was struck dead for offering to touch the ark of God—if Baltassar's frightful sentence was drawn upon the walls of his palace for profaning the vessels of the temple consecrated to him, what ought not you to dread when you villanously profane the body and blood of Christ?

Dearest Saviour! why hast thou thus liberally given thyself to man? Didst thou not foresee the horrid sacrileges he would so often commit? Didst thou not foresee the torturing racks to which he would expose thee? nor the heavy damnation which he would draw on himself? Thou didst; but thy design was love. Oh! may I never be guilty of this base ingratitude.

Examine yourselves, and before you offer to approach the Holy Sacrament, purify your hearts by a sincere confession and detestation of sin; prepare yourselves by a lively faith, and other Christian virtues. "Ah! how pure," says St. Chrysostom, "ought that tongue to be which is purpled by the tremendous blood of Jesus."

## FRIDAY AFTER THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

ON DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.\*

Who shall enter into the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and fathom the abyss of that inexhaustible fountain of love? Who shall measure the "length, and breadth, and height, and depth," of that source of all good to man! Who shall "comprehend the charity of Christ, which surpasseth knowledge," and not be "filled unto all the fullness of God!"—Eph. iii. Who shall approach to that furnace of love, and not feel the effects of its scorching flames! "Oh! thou most beautiful of the sons of men," exclaims St. Bernard, "thy side was opened for no other purpose but to give us an entrance into thy heart: and this heart itself was not opened but to afford us a dwelling-place, free from all things that can disturb our repose. This adorable heart was pierced, that, by its visible wound, we might see and understand the invisible wound which his love of us had inflicted on it. Oh! how could Jesus testify his love for us more strongly than by resolving that not only his body, but also his very heart, should be pierced for us! Who, then, can help loving a heart thus wounded! Who can be insensible to so much love!"—*Tract. de Pass.* "O love, O sovereign love of the Heart of Jesus!" says St. Francis of Sales, "what heart can bless and praise thee, as thou deservest to be blessed and praise! How good and bountiful is the Lord Jesus! how perfect and amiable is his Heart! Let this amiable Heart ever live in our hearts."

Do we feel anything of this devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus? Do our hearts seem to tend to an union with the Heart of Jesus? The saints were all on fire when they meditated on this adorable object; and shall we be cold and indifferent? Their only desire was to take up their abode in

that Sacred Heart; and shall we turn away from it, for the sake of fixing our tabernacle in this place of exile, and yet look forward to the possession of it hereafter in the company of the saints? If we do not love in this world, can we reasonably expect to be immersed in the boundless ocean of love, in the world to come?

Examine yourselves, and meditate frequently on the love which burnt in the Sacred Heart of Jesus for you. Say from time to time: "I adore and salute thee, O precious Heart of my Jesus, that loved me unto death: grant that I may love thee with all my heart, now and for ever more."—*Milner's Dev. to Sac. Heart.*

N. B. *Should the Friday after the Octave-day of Corpus Christi fall before the fourteenth of June, the Reflections, that may be wanting in this place, are to be taken from those which were omitted before Candlemas Day.*

#### ON THE MISERIES OF LIFE.

*June 15.*]—"MAN born of a woman, is full of many miseries." —Job, xiv. No tongue is capable of summing up the diseases, misfortunes, or infirmities, which so often and so cruelly rack the body. What more common than the stone, the gout, or a fit of the cholic? What more frequent than to have an arm, a leg, or a thigh broken? how many lame and decrepid are there, in perpetual torment? What bodily hardships do the soldier, the merchant, the mechanic undergo? Are not these miseries? Why then are we so fond of this wretched life, and fond even to an excess, to the destruction of our souls?

Consider the afflicting passions of the mind. How often are we dejected by uneasy melancholy! How often overcome by bitter grief!—grief at the loss of a child or parent!—grief at the unkind usage of neighbours! How often are our hearts



gnawed by envy, oppressed with fear, anger, and hatred? A sad life! to be beset on all sides with merciless enemies. And yet, that it should be so generally caressed, that reasonable men should shake hands with its miseries, what can we think?

The soul has her miseries too. She is blind in her understanding, depraved in her will, obstinate, and perverse. She is corrupt in her judgment, decayed in her memory, feeble in all her faculties. How many poor souls are betrayed to the world, are slaves to the devil, and liable to his torments? Are not these the greatest of miseries? Ah! let us repent of past offences, and earnestly labour for that blessed country, where we may “see and love, love and praise, praise and rejoice, for ever and ever.”—*St. Augustin.*

Examine yourselves, and take care that you forfeit not the life to come, by criminally providing for this present one, which is every way full of misery. Decline sin: vigorously pursue the cause of God and your souls. Thus will you happily begin a life on earth, which shall never end.

#### ON THE CERTAINTY OF DEATH.

*June 16.]*—DEATH spares no one. “It is appointed for all men once to die.”—Heb. ix. It is not in the power of man to reverse this decree. It reaches from the throne to the cottage: it universally includes all mankind, great, little, rich, poor, young, and old. The day will come, when these bodies shall be the food of worms. And why do we pamper them? The hour will come, when we must take a long farewell of the dear things of this life. And why do we set our affections on them? We must bid adieu to wife, husband, beloved children, good friends, and plentiful estates, and take our way into another country, where all that we set such a value on here, will disappear like smoke.

Good God! is it possible that men should think so little on death!—that they should live and sin, as if they were

immortal!—that pride, anger, detraction, impurity, should be the daily and fatal practice of their lives! O give me thy grace, that my life may be a preparation for this last hour. I see that it is a hard matter to die well. I believe that thousands have unhappily miscarried. I know that a good death entirely depends on a good life.

Christians, what preparation do we make for this last important step, which has caused even the greatest saints to tremble? “Go forth, my soul,” said St. Hilarion, at the point of death, “thou hast near upon seventy years served thy God, and dost thou fear death?” If this great saint was thus fearful of death, ought not we to dread it? Let us, by self-denial, by prayer and good works, lay up provision for that country, where we shall find no other than what we ourselves have sent before.

Examine yourselves, and be very careful to retrench sin, the only evil which makes death uneasy. Fix death always before your eyes. Keep the same strict watch over your thoughts, words, and actions, as you would if you knew they were to be the last of your lives. Remember that you “are dust, and into dust you shall return.”—Gen. iii.

#### ON THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE HOUR OF DEATH.

*June 17.]*—WHEN shall we die? Shall it be in the winter or summer? by day or by night? a week, a month, a year hence? The time is uncertain: “we know not the day nor the hour.”—Mark, xiii. Where shall we die? Shall it be at home or abroad? In our beds, or at the table? The place is uncertain. How shall we die? Shall it be by a fever, or the sword? Shall it be violent, or natural? The manner is uncertain.

What helps shall we have? Shall we have the comfortable assistance of our director, and a timely opportunity of worthily receiving the rites of the church? We know not. Shall we

truly repent, and in our agonizing hour happily surmount the last and most vigorous efforts of Satan? We cannot tell. Alas! we no nothing more, than that death will come as a thief, and, very probably, when we least expect it. It happened so to the worldly man in the gospel: "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be demanded of thee."—Luke xii.

If it were revealed to us, that our death would be before the end of this year, how effectually should we withdraw our affections from this vain world! with how close a hand should we curb our passions! what devotions should we not perform! what penances should we not undergo! what virtues should we not embrace! We may be in our graves before the end of this month: and ought we, in prudence, to be less solicitous? By death, we enter upon eternity. Oh! how much depends on this critical and uncertain moment.

Examine yourselves, and let your lives be a preparation for this uncertain hour. Remember, it is he who lives well that dies well. "Set your house in order," (Isa. xxxviii.), and reform all the failings of your lives: that so, let death knock when it will, you may be ever ready to say, with St. Paul: O Lord, it is what I have desired; "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with thee."—Phil. i.

#### ON THE DEATH OF THE SINNER.

*June 18.]*—THE sinner is dying. What dread oppresses his conscience! what anguish seizes his soul! If he casts an eye on his past life, the disorders thereof frighten him into despair. If he sues for mercy, he has no confidence to expect it. If he thinks on his future lot, the judgments of a provoked God rack his thoughts.

The priest comes. He bids him arm against death with acts of devotion: but these are arms he knows not how to use. He solicits him to make an act of faith: but alas! his faith has long been dead: he knows not how to reanimate it,

for he has seldom entertained a serious thought either of God or heaven. He advises him to raise up his heart by an act of divine love: Oh! his heart has long been, and is now strongly fixed on creatures, and how is he on a sudden to fix it on God alone? He presses him to make an act of resignation, and pay the tribute of nature with an humble submission:—what! to leave the world? O this it is that galls his soul. “Cruel death! dost thou thus force me away?”—*1 Kings, xv.*

The death of the sinner is the most unhappy of deaths:—unhappy, because he is confounded at the sight of his past crimes;—unhappy, because he is entering on a miserable eternity, to be reserved as an object of his God’s indignation. O Lord, let me not die the death of the sinner. O receive me into thy protection on the day of my departure. Make that hour favourable to me, and rather let the rest of my life be sad and sorrowful.

Examine yourselves, and by a virtuous life endeavour to avoid the sinner’s death. Remember what St. Jerom says: “Of a hundred thousand men, whose lives have been habitually wicked, scarcely one shall find mercy at his death.” We think that all is well, provided we get the assistance of a priest, make a confession, or give signs of a repenting heart. But, good God! how different are thy judgments from those of men!

#### ON THE DEATH OF THE JUST.

*June 19.]*—THE just man is dead: he has put a happy period to his labours: he has consummated his victories; he is crowned with glory. “Precious in the sight of God is the death of his saints.”—*Ps. cxv.* The saints and angels stood ready to receive him, and, in a glorious train, accompanied him to bliss. Ah blessed soul! thou hast triumphed over death. No more shalt thou be molested with the vain threats

of a wretched world. No more shalt thou fear the attempts of Satan, or his eternal torments. Thou art safely entered into the joys of thy Lord.

How unlike is the death of the sinner to the just man's death. Set a crucifix before them. One flies from it, as from the image of an exasperated judge: the other embraces it, as the comfortable representative of a kind Redeemer. The one dies in rage and despair: the other closes his eyes with a joyful submission to the will of Providence. "O Lord, let me die the death of the just, and let my last end be like unto theirs."—Numb. iii.

Do we desire that our death should be precious in the sight of God? If so, our lives must edify the eyes of men. Would we die an easy death? It cannot be, unless we lead a penitential life. Let us live piously, and we shall die comfortably: let us live in fear, and we shall die with courage. Ah! could we say, with St Paul: "I die daily" to sin, and to my passions; "I die daily" to the world, and to its vanities, we should then be sure to die a happy death.—1 Cor. xv.

Examine yourselves, and in order to die the death of the just, place the image of death before your eyes by constant meditation. "Remember your last things, and you shall never sin."—Eccl. vii. Beg the intercession of the saints and angels. Have a particular devotion to our Blessed Lady, and say, from your hearts: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen."

#### ON JUDGMENT.

*June 20.*]—AFTER death follows judgment. The soul no sooner leaves the body, but that very moment she is arraigned before the tribunal of her God, there to give up a rigorous account of her past life. How dreadful must this appearance be! An examination will be made, in what manner she has exercised her faculties—*will, memory, and understanding*: how

she has employed her senses, and complied with the obligations of her state; what improvement she has made of her talents; what benefit of the sacraments; how she has answered the calls of heaven. Alas! what plea can the poor soul make?

The inward pride and malice of her heart is here unfolded: her impurities, which for a time lay covered in the shades of darkness, are brought to light: her black detractions, the scandal she has so often given, her oaths and curses, visibly appear: her brutal drunkenness, her sacrilegious communions, all the sins of her life past, public and private, little and great, of commission and omission, sins of ignorance, frailty, or malice, all are laid open to the charge of the poor distressed soul.

Does she pray? prayer comes too late. Does she break forth into penitential tears? they are unseasonable now. Has she recourse to the help of friends? she is in the midst of enemies. Can she deny the accusations? it is impossible, an all-seeing God is her judge. Does she cry for mercy? it is a time of justice. "Enter not, O Lord, into judgment with thy servant, for no man living shall be justified in thy sight."—Ps. cxlii.

Examine yourselves, and let it be your chiefest care to get your accounts ready. You do not know but that this very night you may unexpectedly be cited to the bar of "divine justice, to render an account of your stewardship."—Luke, xvi. "Judge yourselves" now by a daily examination, and detestation of sin, "and you shall not be judged," (Luke, vi.); at least no otherwise, than as worthy of bliss.

#### ON THE SENTENCE OF THE REPROBATE.

*June 21.*]—THE examination being over, the sinner receives his definitive sentence: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels."—Matt. xxv. Go, for ever, from thy God, thy Father,

thy Jesus. O cruel divorce! "Go, thou cursed," from me. Good Lord! is it not enough that the sinner should go? must he go cursed too? A child ought to dread nothing more than the curse of his parents: but to be cursed by God!! And whither must he go? Into *eternal fire*. O inconceivable misery! to burn for ever! as long as God shall be God! And what companions? No other than the devils, his merciless enemies: devils, instead of God and his angels.

Unfortunate sinner! what hast thou lost? Thou mightest have been happy with the saints for ever: and now thou art doomed to be tormented with devils. For thee was the inheritance of bliss prepared, and thou hast blindly exchanged it for the flames of hell. For thee was the blood of Jesus shed, and by thy sins thou hast made it void. Ah! "who can stand before the face of God's indignation?"—Nahum, i.

What will our lot be? Shall we be placed at the right-hand of our judge? It is uncertain. Shall we be confounded with the reprobate, and receive their sentence? We cannot tell. We know no more than this certain truth: "many are called, but few are chosen."—Matt. xxii. O Lord! "if the just man shall hardly be saved," (1 Pet. iv.), what will become of us?

Examine yourselves, and be sure to prepare against this awful sentence. Shun all sin. In your daily prayers, importune heaven to come to your assistance. Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, with a tender compassion: clothe the naked: visit the sick: visit the imprisoned. The doing these, and other goodworks, can alone entitle you to a favourable sentence.

#### ON THE SENTENCE OF THE ELECT.

June 22.]—"COME, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world."—Matt. xxv. Happy invitation! Come: not to carry your crosses after me, but to reign with me: not to renounce your

pleasures, but to enjoy them plentifully, to be witnesses and companions of my glory. Come from the vale of tears to the place of joy; from the place of banishment, to your long wished for country. You, who have been afflicted by the appointments of my Providence; you, who have been reviled and persecuted by the world, “come and see how sweet is the Lord,” (Ps. xxxiii.), “and how bountiful a rewarder to those who love him.”—1 Cor. ii.

Blessed souls! we cannot conceive your overwhelming joys on this day of triumph. Never was victory so grateful after a doubtful engagement: never liberty so welcome after an unhappy slavery: nor was ever port so comfortable after a dangerous navigation. “O Lord! let me share in this benediction.”—Gen. xxvii.

Hark! how the damned souls envy their condition: but it is all in vain. “These are they, whom we had in derision, and in reproach. We, senseless wretches, esteem their lives madness, and their end without honour: but see, they are enrolled among the children of God, and with his saints is their eternal lot. Therefore, we have erred from the way of truth.”—Wisd. v. Do we piously envy the blessed saints? Do our lives speak an ardent desire of being admitted into their happy number?

Examine yourselves, and remember that you must follow the examples of the saints, if you hope to have a part in their bliss. Be poor in spirit: hunger after justice: be meek and merciful: make peace with all men: be clean of heart: suffer persecution for justice sake. Thus shall you share in the sentence of the Elect, since Christ has already declared that such as these are blessed.

#### ON THE PAIN OF SENSE IN HELL.

*June 23.*]—It must be a lamentable sight to see a criminal flayed alive, broken on the wheel, or roasted, like a Laurence,



at a slow fire. And yet, what is this to the flames of hell? Think of gridirons, wild beasts, Babylonian furnaces, they are but shadows, when compared with what the damned suffer. "Oh! how terrible a thing it is, to fall into the hands of the living God."—Heb. x.

Each sense has its peculiar torment. The eyes, which took delight in impure glances, have ugly devils for their eternal objects. The ears, that entertained filth and detraction, have the outcries of the damned for their doleful music. The smell, which delighted in extravagant sweets, has the stench of hell for its noisome scent. The taste is embittered with the gall of dragons: and the feeling, which usually offends most, is oppressed with fire that burns everlastingly.

Compute the years that your thoughts are able to reach to: let them be as many millions as there are sands on the shore, drops in the ocean, atoms in the air, still you will never find an end of eternity. And to burn for ever! If it would be an insupportable thing to be confined to a bed of roses for the space of a few weeks, what can we think of burning in hell for all eternity! Alas! "which of us can dwell in a devouring fire, or who can inhabit everlasting burnings!"—Isa. xxxiii. "Here burn, here cut: spare me not here, O Lord, provided thou sparest me eternally."—*St. Augustin.*

Examine yourselves, and if you are in the state of mortal sin, speedily repent: you must repent or burn. Dread to lay down to sleep in that unhappy state: who knows whether you shall live till morning? Meditate daily on this place of torments; and remember that there is but a small thread of life betwixt the sinner and hell.

#### ON ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

*June 24.*]—NEVER did any saint deserve greater encomiums than did John the Baptist. The patriarchs and prophets of the old law did not excel him. Hear what our Saviour says

of him: "Amen, I say to you, of the born of women, there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist."—Matt. xi. He calls him his angel: he was pleased to be baptised by him: nay, the very Jews took him for their Messiah. Let us honour this illustrious saint. He is truly *great*.

It was not birth, nor riches, nor anything of this world, that raised our Baptist to this great dignity. It was his humility, chastity, his zeal for souls, and contempt of the world: it was his penitential life that thus recommended him. *Great Saint!* what need had you of penance, when you were happily sanctified in your mother's womb, and a lasting innocence accompanied your life? Are locusts and wild honey your best entertainment? Can you find no other habitation but a lonesome desert? nor better clothing than the rough skin of a camel? Ah! Christians, it is for our instruction: it is to teach us, that the followers, as well as the fore-runner of Christ, ought to lead a life of penance.

We have been sinners, although St. John was not: and have we done penance for our repeated sins? It must be done in this world, or in the world to come. Choose the place you like best: but, let me tell you, the greatest torments here, are not to be compared to the least in purgatory.

Examine yourselves, and pray for the spirit of St. John the Baptist. Labour by penance, and a virtuous life, to follow the ways of Christ, as he prepared them. Great was his love of retirement, in continuing many years in a melancholy desert. Great was his humility, in declaring himself to be a mere voice: and great was his zeal in rebuking sinners, and in laying down his life for justice and truth.

#### ON THE PAIN OF LOSS IN THE DAMNED.

*June 25.]*—NOTHING less than God can satisfy the soul of man. Although in this life, it be vainly led away by a thousand amusements, it has a natural idea of the grandeur of

God; and it is no sooner delivered from the dark prison of the body, but it is carried on, with a kind of violence, to the possession of him, and can find no rest but in that *Sovereign Good*. Hence it is that, of all the torments the damned undergo, none is so insupportable as the *loss of God*. They are sensible that he is the unspeakable joy of angels; and not to possess him is their greatest torment. They know that he is infinitely good and amiable; and it is their hell that they cannot love him.

If such a heavy sadness naturally fills our hearts at the last farewell of a beloved friend or parent, that death itself is not more afflicting, what a killing grief must oppress these souls who know that they have lost, and who know what it is to lose, their God, their Redeemer, the best of Fathers? The flames of hell are not to be compared to it. Ah! there are no miseries like those of the soul. O good Jesus! "illuminate my eyes, that I sleep not in sin: nor let my enemy say, I have prevailed over him."—Ps. xii.

Absalom took it for an unparalleled affliction to be deprived of the sight of his father David: "Why came I from Gessur? I beg I may see the face of my king: if he be mindful of my iniquity, let him kill me."—2 Kings, xiv. If this were so, what must the damned think of losing God, and losing him for ever? Ah! let nothing in this world be put in the balance with him. Let the rueful misfortune of these unhappy souls be an instructive lesson to us.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved rather to hazard all that is dear to you in this world, than lose your God. Be always on your guard; and whenever the devil shall offer to attack you, foil him with this weapon: "What! shall I lose God for the sake of a mere trifle?—a God who has been so gracious as to have hitherto preserved me from that precipice, where thousands are lamenting for sins much less than I have committed?"

## ON THE PAINS OF PURGATORY.

*June. 26.]*—SUM up the most cruel torments that have ever been invented, fire, swords, racks, dungeons; all are nothing to the flames of purgatory. It is a fire kindled by an Almighty God—a fire so active as to burn souls, and to burn, not for a day, a week, a month, but perhaps for a thousand years and more, without consuming them. “Lord, rebuke me not in thy fury, nor chastise me in thy wrath.”—Ps. xxxvii.

God is merciful. He is a tender father, and the best of fathers. The souls in purgatory are his children: by his eternal decrees, he has enrolled them in the number of his saints. And yet, by reason of their venial sins, or because they have not satisfied for former great ones, of which they have received pardon, this loving father will have his dear children lay long tormented in those flames. Oh! how displeasing to Almighty God, is even venial sin, which, perhaps, the best of us make so slight account of!

Christians, it is in our power to make satisfaction for past offences by easy acts of penance; and why do we not perform them? We may, with little labour, prevent what otherwise will one day cost us dear; and why do we neglect it? Our truly penitential tears may, at present, extinguish that fire, which a torrent of tears will not extinguish hereafter; and why do we not weep? “O Lord, cleanse me in this life, and make me such, that I may never need the cleansing fire.”—*St. Augustin.*

Examine yourselves, and carefully avoid all venial sins, more especially those dangerous ones of custom and neglect, which are the fuel that feeds this glowing fire. Let the flames of purgatory blaze before your eyes, that so, by a Christian fear, you may escape its torments. By alms, prayer, and other good works, make satisfaction in this world for your past offences, that you may not suffer in the world to come.

## ON THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

*June. 27.]*—SHOULD we see a person, by some sad accident, encompassed on all sides by a raging fire; did we hear him lamentably crying out for help from amidst the flames; we should certainly be very unnatural, were we not to help him, if in our power; or, if not in our power, we must have hearts of stone did we not pity him. And can we, without giving help, or showing pity, behold a friend—a wife—a child—a parent in the flames of purgatory, burning there, perhaps, on our account? and perhaps, even, because they loved us too much?

It is very probable that we have some friends in that place of punishment. Alas! poor souls, they suffer much. Hear their cries: "Take pity on me, at least you my friends, take pity on me."—Job, xix. These are their moans. They solicit us by their tears, and by that Christian compassion which we ought to show them. They cannot do the least thing towards their own deliverance: but it is in our power to merit for them.

Therefore, let us do it. A prayer, an alms, a self-denial offered with a good intention for the benefit of these souls, what will it not effect? Ah! how great a comfort will it be to us, when all those souls, whom we have contributed to deliver out of purgatory by our charitable endeavours, shall appear in our defence before a terrible judge! How many friends shall we thus engage to help us, when we ourselves shall come into this place of torment! Certainly, "it is a wholesome cogitation to pray for the dead."—2 Mac. xii.

Examine yourselves, and be not backward in assisting the poor suffering souls in purgatory. Help them by your prayers. Give now and then an alms for their relief. Fail not to afford them those charitable succours, which you yourselves would wish for in the like circumstances.

## ON THE BLISS OF HEAVEN.

*June 28.*]—LOOK up at the sun, moon, stars, and firmament; propose to your thoughts all that you can imagine great and charming; it falls infinitely short of the bliss of heaven. “Neither hath the eye seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive, what God has prepared for those who love him.”—1 Cor. ii.

God can give no more than himself. He is the happiness of the most blessed Trinity; and this happiness is enjoyed by the saints. They possess their God without disturbance, for they can never lose him. They love him without interruption, for he fills their hearts. They behold him without ceasing, because every moment discloses to them new objects of joy. Ah! “happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.”—Ps. cxliii.

How many saints have forsaken the world to purchase heaven! How many have voluntarily shed their blood to inherit this kingdom! How many, even in these times, have relinquished father, mother, and all that is dear in this world, that, by a recluse and penitential life they may gain this bliss! Alas! the hair-cloth of confessors, or the racks of martyrs, bear no proportion to the glory which has been revealed in them. Our purchasing heaven cost the blood of a God: yet, he thought it was not purchased at too dear a rate. With a joyful willingness he bore his cross for us; such was the idea that he had of our bliss. Christians, shall we do nothing for ourselves? Shall we not strive for heaven, by an imitation of the life of Christ and his saints?

Examine yourselves, and let the bliss of heaven be the object of your thoughts, and the centre of your hearts. Wean your affections from a deceitful world. Say, with St. Augustin: “O Lord, thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts cannot rest, till they rest in thee.”

## ON SS. PETER AND PAUL.

*June 29.*—St. Peter was called to the apostleship by Christ; Christ washed his feet at his last supper: he committed to him the government of his sheep without exception: (John xxi.) he gave him the keys of heaven: (Matt. xvi.) he declared him to be the rock, upon which he would build his church; and thus appointed him to be the head of it. O father, and pastor of faithful souls, how happy am I in being one of your children and part of your flock! I acknowledge you to be the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth. Whosoever sits in your chair, him do I acknowledge to be the visible head of the church.

St. Peter's zeal was a clear evidence of that love which burnt in his breast. It was his zeal for Christ that wounded Malchus, the servant of the High Priest. It was the violence of his zeal, that threw him into the sea to meet his Lord. It was his zeal that converted so many thousand souls, and caused him to lay down his life for the faith he preached. Are we half so zealous? Are we neither tired by labour, nor terrified by death, when the good of souls exposes us to it?

St. Paul, though once Saul, and a bloody persecutor, is now a chosen vessel of Jesus Christ: he is a pillar of God's church: he is a saint in heaven. Let us beg his patronage on this day of his festival. St. Paul was wrapt up to the third heaven, where he heard those secrets, which shall never be in the power of man to utter. He was appointed by God to carry his name through the pagan world. Who can despair, when he sees Paul, once a grievous sinner, now a saint in heaven! Here it visibly appears, that the most abandoned sinners are sometimes reserved for the greatest graces. Christians, have you persecuted Christ by your sins? Be not dejected: look on Paul: but be not unmindful of his repentance. Can you say, with him: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course: I have kept the faith?"—2 Tim. iv.

Examine yourselves, and strive to walk in the steps of these two glorious apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, who, on this day, purpled Rome with their blood—one by dying on a cross, the other by the sword. It is by imitating their virtues that you are to merit their favourable protection.

#### ON PRIDE.

*June 30.*]—PRIDE is the root of all evil; take it away, and you will purge the world of vice. Ask the avaricious man how he came to be so, and he will tell you, because riches are the ordinary means of raising him in the world. Ask the revengeful, why they are so, they will tell you, that tamely to forgive, is a blemish on their honour. Ask the envious, why they thus miserably rack themselves, they will tell you, that they had rather do it, than quietly see another promoted above them. “O Lord! take from me the spirit of pride, and give me the treasure of thy humility.”—*St. Aug.*

“Every proud spirit is an abomination to the Lord.”—Prov. vi. Pride threw the fallen angels into the deep abyss of hell. Pride swept off seventy thousand of David’s people, by a three days pestilence. Pride bereaves us of grace: it abandons us to our passions: it damns our souls. How hateful must it be in the sight of God, when such judgments follow it? True it is, “God resists the proud.”—James, iv.

What have we to be proud of? Alas! we are but dust and ashes, full of miseries, incapable of ourselves of a good thought. We are sinners: we have ungratefully abused the favours of heaven; the best of us are subject to a thousand failings, and can we be proud? The life of Christ was a perpetual humiliation: “he humbled himself to the death of the cross.”—Phil. ii. The blessed Virgin, and all the saints were humble: and shall we alone be proud? Go, infernal pride! thou art a child of hell; thou hast nothing to do in a Christian heart.

Examine yourselves, and resolve to avoid this grievous sin,



which daily crowds hell with innumerable souls. Search your consciences, for pride is a subtle enemy; it lurks in the deepest recesses of our hearts; it corrupts our best actions, and often transforms itself into an angel of light. Be, therefore, on the watch, and pray, with David: "From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord."—Ps. xviii.

#### ON VAIN-GLORY.

*July 1.*]—WHAT was Aman the better for boasting of the honours conferred on him, when the behaviour of a poor Jew, Mordecai, racked him with despair? Consider how Jesus was received into Jerusalem with hosannas of joy, and, five days after, barbarously crucified: and you will be easily convinced, that human praise is but the flattering and inconstant breath of sinners. And is it not strange that we should be so generally led away by it? The grace of God does not inspire the saints to undergo more rigorous mortifications for heaven, than vain-glory does its adorers for the esteem of men. How does it enslave them? What broken sleeps and restless hours? What pains do they not take to gain their ends? And, after all, to what purpose? Ah! did they but take half the pains to gain heaven, they would be glorious saints.

What have we to glory in? Is it *honour*? nothing is more inconstant. Many, like Aman, have wretchedly fallen from its very summit.

What have we to *boast* of? Is it *riches*? they are not our own. We are but stewards. And do we answer the charge? Is it *birth*? we should have been as miserable as the poorest, had we not been distinguished by a singular mercy. We came naked into the world, and so shall we leave it. Do we glory in the advantages of grace or nature? Alas! "what have we that we have not received? and, if we have received it, why do we glory as if we had received it not?"—1 Cor. iv.

Christians, if you must glory, let it be, with St. Paul, (Gal. vi.) in the cross of Christ. Let it be in submitting to the divine appointments under the severest trials. Glory that you are called to the true faith, and are of the fold of Christ. Glory that you are heirs of heaven.

Examine yourselves, and carefully avoid all vain-glory; it is injurious to God, unjust in itself, and very prejudicial to your souls. "To God alone is honour and glory due."—1 Tim. i. He is so jealous of it, that "he will not give it to another," (Isa. xlii.) although he has given his blood for the redemption of mankind. Pray, therefore, with humble David: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory."—Ps. cxiii.

#### ON ANGER.

*July 2.*—It is impossible to sum up the injuries, the detractions, the desires of revenge, the secret grudges, irreconcilable discords, and the innumerable other sins, which are the unhappy issue of the sin of *Anger*. It is a passion that "only rests in the bosom of fools."—Eccl. vii. It makes its slaves insupportable to themselves and to their neighbours: it robs them of reason, peace, charity, and grace: it often ruins them for ever. How deplorable a passion must it be, when it fills the world with hatred, and hell with souls? And shall we be led away by this wretched passion? Shall every trifling word or imagination provoke us to it? Let us not thus unhappily revenge ourselves.

Why are we in a passion? God is not so. No: he bears our repeated treasons with patience; or else, long ago, we had dwelt in hell. Christ was not so. No: "Learn of me," he says, "for I am meek and humble of heart."—Matt. xi. The numerous calumnies that were thrown upon him by insulting Jews could not provoke him; and shall we, Christians, bear nothing from a neighbour? Alas! our sins have

deserved infinitely more than what can befall us in this world.

O Lord, remove all anger from my heart. It is my *due* to be despised, provoked, and every way afflicted, having so often afflicted thee by my crying sins. O meek Lamb! who wert led to the slaughter without opening thy mouth, strengthen my weakness. I see my heart is corrupt, and my passions excited by every trifling contradiction. However, with thy assistance I am resolved to subdue them. I will never speak in anger: I will be silent under the greatest provocations: an imitation of thy virtues shall be the study of my life; on such souls I know that thy spirit rests, and that they rest in thee.

Examine yourselves, and let these be your pious resolutions: pull down pride: cut off self-love: retrench all violent inclination to creatures. From these heads it is that anger takes its rise. Cherish it not, on a supposition that you have a just cause for it: the most cholerick excuse themselves by the same plea. Be always on your guard, and offer up, every day, some prayer for grace to subdue it.

#### ON REVENGE.\*

*July 3.*]—"REVENGE is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."—Rom. xii. These are memorable words. By them we are given to understand, that the Lord claims to himself alone the authority of taking revenge on those who injure us: and that he will not entrust that right to our hands: *revenge is mine*. We are given, likewise, to understand, that he will not fail to exercise this authority upon "the soul of every man that worketh evil:" (Rom. ii.) *I will repay*. Oh! how jealous is God of the attribute of his *justice*! And, how just is he in inflicting judgment on those who injure their fellow-creatures! May we not, then, securely place our cause in his hands and leave justice and judgment to him?

Were we capable of exercising judgment with justice, the Lord, perhaps, would have entrusted the power to us. But, our nature is too weak for such an important trust. We can seldom or never judge impartially in our own cause. The influence of self-love throws a veil over our own defects, and, not unfrequently, causes us to believe that we are the innocent party, at the time that we are the only persons who have given the offence. Again, we may say that we can seldom judge aright concerning our offending brethren, for other reasons. We know not the secrets of their hearts: we cannot ascertain, with precision, the motives which actuate them: and, consequently, we cannot pronounce, with certainty, what degree of malice, or whether or not they were actuated with any malice at all against us.

Thus circumstanced, would it be fitting that judgment should be entrusted to us? Should we not, in general, judge unjustly, and measure out the measure of punishment to our real or imaginary enemies, far beyond their deserts? To preserve us, therefore, from the danger of incurring the guilt of injustice, the Lord has made himself the umpire between us and our offending brethren; and he requires that we should leave our cause entirely in his hands: *revenge is mine: I will repay.*

Examine yourselves, and see whether anger induces you to seek revenge, or whether you bear wrongs with that patience which becomes a Christian. Henceforward, at least, seek to possess your souls in patience: and be convinced that there is a God, who will espouse your cause, and avenge it in his own good time.

#### ON REVENGE.—CONTINUED.\*

*July 4.*]—"REVENGE not yourselves, my dearly beloved."—Rom. xii. Are we never to seek revenge of those who have injured us? If an enemy assail us with reproaches and insults, are we to submit, without replying a word? If an enemy

endeavour to destroy our good name by calumnies and slanders, are we to be silent under his attacks? If an enemy strike us on the right cheek, are we to turn to him the left also? or, if he take away our coat, are we to give him our cloak likewise?

We will not say that the *letter* of the law is necessarily to be followed in all these points. We may, without crime, endeavour to protect our character, our person, and our property, against invaders. But we must act only on the *defensive*. If we have already sustained damage, we must not make reprisals. We must not attack them, and endeavour to repay injury by injury. *To bear and forbear*, is the maxim of the true Christian. We must throw ourselves into the hands of God, and refer our cause entirely to him. He will be our protector: and he will not fail to inflict due punishment on our enemies, at the time, and in the manner that he thinks fit. Let us, therefore, on all occasions, submit ourselves to his holy will, and patiently endure the injuries which we cannot avoid.

But, may we not pray that God would speedily revenge our cause, and render evil to those who have done evil to us? By no means. We must remove from our minds every symptom of ill-will against our enemies, and of impatience under trials. We must “love our enemies:” we must “do good to them that hate us:” we must “bless them that curse us: and pray for them that calumniate us.”—Luke, vi.

Examine whether you have ever sought to revenge yourselves, either by thought, word, or deed. For the time to come, “if thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat: if he thirst, give him drink. For, doing this, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome by evil: but overcome evil with good.”—Rom. xii.

#### ON IMPURITY.

*July 5.]*—IMPURITY is a vice so detestably heinous, that by wilfully consenting to it, although it be in thought only, we

forfeit our eternal happiness. There is not a vice more subtle, or more difficult to be overcome, when grown into a habit. It becomes a second nature; and nothing but a miracle of grace can root it out. O Jesus! preserve us from it.

What Christian heart can seriously reflect on the cruel havoc that the sin of impurity makes in the souls of men; and the dreadful misfortunes which it entails upon them, without dissolving away into tears? Is not the far greater part of mankind infected by it? Does it not very early corrupt the hearts of the best inclined? How many are now grovelling amidst the flames of hell, who would have been saints in heaven, had they not been tainted with this foul sin. When we see persons meek and modest, free from all riotous or scandalous excesses, yet fall a prey to the sin of impurity, what can we think? *O cursed incontinence.*

May it not be said, that the bad confessions, and sacrilegious communions, so common amongst Christians, are principally to be attributed to this shameful sin? May it not be said, that the aversion which men entertain for virtue, and their obduracy in vice, are the sad effects of criminal impurity? May it not be said, that the blackest scandals, which infest the world, murders, heresies, and the most crying sins, proceed from this unhappy source? Christians, let us not consider impurity as a slight offence. Let us not plead in favour of it, by giving it the soft names of a sin of *frailty*, and *unavoidable*. Let us detest it from our hearts.

Examine yourselves, and the better to subdue all sins of impurity, be resolved to fly them at their first approach. It is by flying, that you are to conquer them. Shun all occasions, more especially these two, *bad company* and *idleness*. In the time of these temptations, cast yourselves in spirit at the foot of the cross, bathing your souls in the blood of Christ. Pray, with holy David: "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels."—Ps. l.

## ON IMPURITY.—CONTINUED.

*July 6.*]—LUCIFER and his angels fell by pride; Adam by disobedience, Cain by murder; yet, God did not repent that he had made them. But no sooner was flesh become corrupted by lust, than he repented and grieved that he had made man.—Gen. vi. Oh! how grievous must that sin be, which caused a most tender God to repent that he had ever made his darling creature, man!

The waters of the deluge were showered down from heaven to quench the impure flames of lust. Sodom and Gomorrah were burnt to ashes in punishment of their impurities. Four and twenty thousand Israelites were massacred, by God's appointment, to wash away their impurities with their own blood. Millions are in hell on account of this sin, though they were redeemed by the blood of Jesus. O how heinous must that sin be, which is thus chastised by the scourge of heaven!

It would be an unpardonable crime for a subject to trample on the picture of his sovereign, in his presence, evidently out of contempt: and is it a less punishable offence to defile our souls, which are the very images of God himself? Jesus Christ has redeemed us. We are *members* of his body; and dare we prostitute these members to brutish impurities. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost: "if any man violate this temple, him shall God destroy."—1 Cor. iii. And are they not violated by this *sin*? Let us not thus offend the most blessed Trinity. God's adorable eye always sees us.

Examine yourselves, and labour all you can for the avoiding and mastering this pernicious evil. It is a domestic enemy: you carry it about with you; and, consequently, it is more dangerous, and more difficult to overcome. Keep a guard upon your senses: for it is through these avenues that it

enters into your hearts. Advise with your director;—frequent the sacraments;—humble yourselves. By these means you will be enabled to overcome this infectious evil.

ON THE FALSE ALLUREMENTS OF IMPURITY.\*

*July 7.]*—WHY are so many millions seduced by the spirit of impurity? Is there anything *real* in the enjoyments which it pretends to give? Ask the unchaste themselves, and they will tell you, that there is more sorrow than pleasure mixed up in the cup of that unhappy vice; and that, although there may be a certain sweetness on the lips, when the cup is taken, it fills the bowels with bitterness and woe. Ask those, who were formerly unchaste, and who have now, for the love of God, forsaken the error of their ways, and they will tell you, that this vice introduced every other evil into their souls;—that they were wretched and miserable;—that they could not satisfy the inordinate cravings of lust; that they felt themselves chained down, as it were, to the earth;—that they were tortured by anxiety, solicitude, and remorse;—that they were strangers to true peace;—and what was worse, that they loathed the things of God, and were entirely regardless of their salvation.

Why then are so many millions seduced by it? It is, because they are not habituated to the practice of the gospel-virtue of *self-denial*. Their chief rule of action is, the following their own will, and the gratifying their own inclinations for pleasures and amusements. Balls, theatres, parties, and whatever else presents an agreeable attraction, they cannot refuse, and they run heedlessly after them, without thinking of the consequences. Thus accustomed to make pleasure their rule and guide, can it be expected that they should be prepared to resist temptations to illicit pleasures, when opportunity occurs, and when their will is in unision with the temptation? Can it be expected that, when their whole frame



seems to crave, as it were, for the gratification of this odious vice, they should be able to practise that virtue of *self-denial*, which, at other times, they would not practise, when temptations were less violent? No: it is a vain delusion. If we will not put ourselves into an attitude of defence against weaker enemies, by accustoming ourselves to self-denials, we shall never be able to resist the attacks of that formidable enemy—our own rebellious flesh, when it assails us with temptation.

Examine in what manner you prepare yourselves to resist the encroachments of this domestic enemy. Be convinced that you have not a more dangerous, or more powerful adversary to contend with: and, in proportion to your peril, so much the more endeavour to guard against it.

#### ON THE REMEDIES AGAINST IMPURITY.\*

*July 8.*]—"CRUCIFY your flesh with its vices and concupiscences," say St. Paul, (Gal. v.) for thus only can you belong to Christ. If we do not crucify the flesh, that is to say, if we do not reduce the flesh into subjection, by continually opposing its corrupt inclinations, it will gain the mastery over the soul, and make her the slave of its own passions. To be able, therefore, to conquer our *vices and concupiscences*, it is necessary that we *crucify the flesh*.

Oh! let us attend to this important point. Let us mortify our sensual appetite by fasting and abstinence. Let us reduce our will into perfect submission to the will of God. Let us refuse every amusement, every gratification, every indulgence which is in opposition to the will of God. Let us learn to submit patiently to the trials and afflictions which the will of God may impose upon us. Let us take up our cross cheerfully, and carry it in silence, after Jesus. And, let us endeavour to strengthen these our good resolutions, by meditations on the vanity of all created things, and of all

momentary enjoyments. Were we to apply these remedies, with constancy and perseverance, the sensual man would soon be reduced into subjection to the spiritual man, and the *flesh*, with its *vices and concupiscences*, would be *crucified*.

In the moments of repentance and fervour, this, probably, will not appear to be a difficult task. All then will seem easy and pleasing. But the time of temptation is the difficult time. Then it is that we are to prove whether we are faithful or not. Although the spirit may be willing, the flesh is weak. We can do nothing of ourselves: our strength must come from God. At all times, therefore, in temptation, and out of temptation, we must pray earnestly and fervently for that protecting grace, which alone can preserve us from falling. We must not confide in our own strength, but, with all humility, we must consider that our only dependance is on God. By the means of prayer, diffidence in ourselves, confidence in God, and mortification, our souls will be armed with strength, and we may bid defiance to all the attacks of the flesh.

Examine whether, or not, you apply these remedies against the vice of impurity. If you have been deficient in any point, be more attentive for the time to come. Remember that “neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor the unclean, &c., shall ever possess the kingdom of God.”—1 Cor. vi.

#### ON THE METHOD OF RESISTING TEMPTATIONS TO LUST.\*

*July 9.*—WE are not to resist impurity as we do other vices. With others, we may come to close quarters. We may reason with our enemy—we may face him—we may defy him. But with the vice of impurity, nothing of this can be done without presumption. In the Christian’s warfare against this vice, his most dangerous enemy is not the devil, but his own domestic companion—the flesh. The ramparts with which he is surrounded, to protect him from external

enemies, are no defence to him here. His enemy is within the walls.

In this critical state, it is his duty to be always on the watch. He must examine all the motions of the flesh, and resist all its encroachments. He must not pamper it with delicacies, nor habituate it unrestrained to innocent enjoyments, when those enjoyments are merely the gratification of the senses. In a particular manner, he must not suffer it to occupy any of the avenues of the soul. He must keep a guard on the eyes, and never suffer them to wander on objects which may occasion dangerous impressions. He must keep a guard on the ears, not to listen to any lustful discourse, or words of double meaning. He must keep a guard on the whole man, and be careful neither to do anything, nor dwell in thought on any object, from which danger is to be apprehended.

If, notwithstanding these precautions, temptation comes on with violence, he must fly. He must not look the enemy in the face, that is, he must not dally with the temptation; he must fly, and he must fly to his great protector. He must prostrate himself at his feet, and, in the words of Peter, he must cry out: "Lord, save me, I perish."—Matt. viii. If earnest prayer do not succeed, he must inflict punishment on his domestic enemy—the flesh, by severe mortification and penance. Let him persevere in this method of combat; and if victory do not immediately ensue, it will not long be retarded.

Examine how you combat this vice of impurity. If you have not hitherto adopted a right method of defence, enter upon other plans; and be assured, that the same God, who has given the victory to others, will give it also to you.

## ON DRUNKENNESS.

*July 10.*—THERE is not a vice either more scandalous in itself, or more pernicious in general, than the vice of drunkenness. It ruins estates, families, health, and reason. It overthrows religion—it foment passions—it damns souls. Is it not a pity to see so many ancient families ruined, and so many fine estates squandered away by drunkenness? Is it not a pity to behold men of talent, who are every way qualified to promote the honour of God, and the good of souls, lose themselves and their reason, by criminally yielding to this brutal vice? How many hereby impair their health to that degree, as properly to become their own self-murderers? How many drunkards are, at this present moment, miserably lamenting in the flames of hell!

When such sinners as these shall be arraigned at the bar of divine justice, what plea will they make? Will it suffice to say, that they have drunk away the comfort of their children or relations?—that they have swallowed down the bread of widows and crying orphans?—that they have drawn their neighbour into a habit of drinking like themselves, and led him into the way of destroying both body and soul?—that they have spent their time in gratifying their senses, indulging their passions, and lavishing away their money, in opposition to the will of God? Will this do?

Let us not think it lawful to get drunk for company's sake: company will not excuse us:—nor for the sake of making merry; there is no mirth in ruining health, estate, family, and soul. Neither let us pretend that drinking drives away care, for it involves us in endless woes. There is no comfort or consolation to be found, but in God alone. Let us not allege that it is to pass away time: alas! time is precious. It was not given us to be wasted in offending God. It is all too little to be employed in working out our salvation.

Examine yourselves, and let no pretence justify the swinish vice of drunkenness. Conceive a horror of it: decline as much as possible the company of drunkards: it is the advice of the wise man.—Prov. xxiii. If they shall reproach you for not associating with them, glory in the reproach, and tell them, with St. Paul: “Drunkards shall never inherit the kingdom of heaven.”—1 Cor. vi.

ON THE REMEDIES AGAINST DRUNKENNESS.\*

*July 11.]*—THE vice of drunkenness must be overcome by *prayer*, self-denial, and frequent meditation. Odious as this vice is, in the sight of both God and man, it is, nevertheless, one of the most difficult to be conquered. And the reason is, because the soul of the drunkard has lost its energy, and is become degraded below the level even of the brute creation:—it is become insensible to all that is good, unfit for prayer and contemplation, and is nothing better than a slave to her own sensual inclinations.

Great exertions, therefore, must be made, in order to ensure the victory. Recourse must be had to frequent, and fervent prayer. Every morning and night, and often during the day, resolutions must be formed against this vice; and every time the resolution is renewed, a fervent prayer must be offered up to him, from whom alone strength can come.

A constant watch must be placed over the sensual appetite, to guard against every inordinate gratification. Not only unlawful indulgences must be refused, but even those things are to be avoided, which are not criminal in themselves, but only leading to excess. For, as few people drink to excess, merely for the love of drinking, but are led on by the love of company, or by the idea that a *little more* will not overpower them, so it is necessary, in order to avoid the danger, to renounce that company, or those places of resort, where excess is to be apprehended; and, at all times, to confine themselves to that

quantity which necessity alone requires. This certainly will be a constant subject of self-denial to those who have been intemperate. But, "if a man will not deny himself," says our Lord, "he cannot be my disciple."—Matt. xvi.

An attention likewise must be paid to frequent meditation of the consequences of this vice—the ruin of families—the loss of health—the pangs of remorse—and the other evils attendant on this vice, even in this world; and in the next, that abyss of eternal flames, where drunkards shall call in vain, like the rich man, for "a drop of water to cool their tongues."—Luke, xvi.

Examine whether you have been, or are in danger of being led into this vice. Shun the danger without delay. Apply the remedies which are proper for your state: and do not sell your "birth-right," for what is more contemptible than a "mess of pottage."—Gen. xxv. Frequently say to yourselves, "Drunkards shall not possess the kingdom of heaven:" (1 Cor. vi.) and reflect upon the import of those words.

#### ON ENVY.

*July 12.]*—ENVY is a repining at another's good, because it seems to lessen our own. Envy is the daughter of pride, the destroyer of charity, the offspring of hell. Eve was betrayed, and through her all mankind, by the devil's envy. Abel was murdered by the envious hand of his brother Cain. The patriarch Joseph was sold by the envy of his hard-hearted brethren. David was persecuted by the mortal envy of Saul. And Jesus was crucified by the envy of the Jews. Let us detest it.

Where can the satisfaction be in having a heart always soured with bitterness, or gnawed with envy on account of the prosperity of a neighbour? And yet, how common is this vice, and what unhappy effects proceed from it? From envy proceed hatred, detraction, contempt, contention, and a

thousand other evils, which utterly destroy charity, and set the world in a flame. If the virtuous lives of others give joy to the angels, ought we to repine at them? Are we to entertain an *evil eye*, because God is *good*?—Matt. xx.

What are our lives? Are we not grieved at the prosperity of a neighbour? Have we not repined at his gifts of fortune, nature, or grace? Have we not been troubled, to see him more caressed and esteemed than ourselves? Have we not been sad, when it has been acknowledged that he possessed brighter wit, more solid understanding, or more brilliant talents than ourselves? Are we not uneasy, when we perceive that his life is more irreproachable, and more virtuous than our own? All this is envy. Have we not, in consequence, endeavoured to lessen his merited reputation? Have we not quarrelled with him, or bore him some secret grudge in our hearts? These are the sad effects of envy.

Examine yourselves, and let it be your principal care to shun this sin, which is so detestable in the sight of God and his holy angels. It is the sin of devils: "The envy, which they bear the saints in heaven," says St. Chrysostom, "is their most grievous torment." Had you a true love for your neighbour, you would never be guilty of it. Beg it, therefore, in your most fervent prayers.

#### ON SLOTH.

*July 13.]*—THERE are hardly any spiritual disorders in the world which are not the unfortunate consequences of sloth. An unbridled affection for the pleasures of the world—a stupid ignorance of the most essential truths—a total forgetfulness of God and salvation, are the dismal effects of this sin. It is the sink of wicked thoughts; "it teaches much malice."—Eccl. xxxiii. Is it not strange that this base sin should be so common amongst men, and that the greatest part of them should fly labour, as they would death itself? Let

us not imitate them. Slothful souls! how long will you sleep? When will you awake from your profound lethargy? Arise: or “poverty, like an armed man,” (Prov. vi.) will suddenly come upon you.

We are here on earth, as in a field of battle. We have numerous and implacable enemies to engage with: we must fight, and conquer, before we shall be crowned. And can this be done without pains? No: heaven is to be gained only by “violence.”—Matt. xi. Let us not, for shame, suffer the solicitude for worldly things to condemn our slothfulness in prosecuting the great affair of salvation. Let it not be said: “Cut down the unprofitable tree: why doth it stand?”—Luke, xiii.

See how Christ laboured through the whole course of his life, for us, sinners. See how the saints laboured to gain heaven. They thought that their hair-cloths and perpetual penances were not half enough. See how the sun and moon are in perpetual motion. “Go to the ant, and consider its labours.”—Prov. vi. And shall we alone be idle—we who have the greatest cause to be diligent? No: we are doomed to labour: “In the sweat of thy brow, shalt thou eat thy bread.”—Gen. iii.

Examine yourselves, and shun all slothfulness in the practice of virtue. It is not enough to avoid evil, we must also do good; for not to do good is to do evil. Labour to make good what you have lost by sin; labour to avoid sin for the time to come; labour to obtain an increase of virtue: “Be always doing something, that the devil may never find you idle.”—*St. Jerome.*

#### ON THE REMEDIES AGAINST SLOTH.\*

*July 14.*—Is the time of our mortal life so long, that we may be authorised to withdraw any part of it from the purpose for which it was given? Alas! we know not how long we shall live. Perhaps, the moment of our dissolution is at



hand. We are here to-day, and to-morrow perhaps we shall be no more. Are we, then, authorised to waste the present moment, when we are uncertain that we shall have another? Oh! let us rise from our bed of sloth, and begin in earnest. The present moment is all that we can call our own.

What shall we think of our former sloth, when we come to be stretched on the bed of death? How shall we then wish that we had employed the time of health and strength, in preparing ourselves for the awful trial, which is rapidly approaching? Let us live now, as we shall then wish to have lived. How earnestly and perseveringly do worldlings labour for perishable things! how do they strive for a "corruptible crown!" We have an "incorruptible crown" set before us; and shall we "run, as at an uncertainty?" shall we "fight as if we were beating the air?" "No: Let us chastise our bodies, and reduce them into subjection, that we may not become cast-aways."—1 Cor. ix. Let us be strict and regular in our observance of all the duties of religion.

How willingly does a good servant work, when his master's eye is upon him. Let us reflect that our Master is always present with us, and let sentiments of love induce us to labour cheerfully in his service. If the love of God be not sufficiently strong in our breasts, let the influence of self-love be added to it, by seriously weighing the import of this sentence: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent only bear it away."—Matt. xi.

Examine how far you are induced, by sloth, to neglect your duties. For the time to come, prescribe to yourselves a regulation of your time, and a variety of spiritual exercises, both for Sundays and other days. Custom will soon make that easy and agreeable which would otherwise be tedious and distasteful.

## ON LUKEWARMNESS.

*July 15.]*—THE state of a soul in mortal sin is very dangerous; but a lukewarm state is, in some manner, still worse. Hear the words of Christ to the Bishop of Laodicea: “I would thou wert cold or hot; but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.”—Apoc. iii. What! does Jesus Christ, who patiently endures the greatest sinners;—who did not cast off the traitor Judas himself; does he abhor a tepid soul? Will he cast him off? Oh! if we are banished from the heart of Jesus, what will become of us? whither shall we fly? Christians, “throw off this pernicious lukewarmness, which thus excites the disgust of God.”—*St. Bernard.*

But why is it so pernicious? Because, if you tell the worst of sinners of an angry God, if you sound in his ears death, judgment, hell, and heaven, the alarm of these truths may possibly turn his heart. But it is not so with the tepid soul. She is guilty of no crying sins: her faults are spiritual: her crimes chiefly consist in performing her duties more through humour, custom, and inclination, than through the desire of pleasing God. Thus, her faults being mingled with acts of piety, they are unperceived, and oftentimes, suffered to go on, till her eyes are closed by an unhappy death.

Experience proves this to be the truth. Is not that person in a desperate way, who is heedless of his corporal diseases, and who laughs at the physician, when he is reminded by him of his imminent danger? It is the same with the lukewarm. Prayer, reading, the mass, the most healing sacraments become fruitless to them; because they blindly imagine that all goes on well. Alas! what resource have these poor souls to fly to? O God! I acknowledge my lukewarm state; and since thou hast been pleased to make me sensible of the danger, may it please thee to draw me from it. O let not this repeated

grace, which perhaps may be the last that thou wilt ever offer me, prove ineffectual.

Examine yourselves, and place always before your eyes the dangerous state of a lukewarm soul. Remember that, "cursed is he who doth the work of God negligently." Let this sentence of Jeremiah sound in your ears: let it be a spur to sluggish nature: "cursed is he who doth the work of God negligently."—Jer. xlviii.

#### ON THE MARKS OF LUKEWARMNESS.

*July 16.]*—LUKEWARMNESS is a mixture of good and evil. A tepid soul would not consent to commit a mortal sin; but makes no scruple of committing venial ones. She strives to avoid all gross detraction, but thinks it nothing to censure her neighbour, or to expose his failings. She seems to be displeased with sins of impurity; but seeks eagerly after a soft and easy life. She does not covet another man's goods; but she has a strong attachment to the things of this world. She prays and fasts; but it is oftentimes out of custom, oftentimes carelessly, and as often with a bad or sinister intention. She approaches the sacraments: her confessions and communions are frequent; but, alas! how often without due preparation! how often without amendment! She has little, or no concern about overcoming small failings: she aims not at perfection: and, although desirous of gaining heaven, she is not willing to gain it by violence. This is the description of a lukewarm soul.

Is not this our case? Do we not find this dangerous mixture of good and evil residing in our hearts? If so, let us remedy it, since nothing more exasperates the anger of our God.

O God, I must confess that I have been hitherto very tepid. But, since thou hast been pleased to open my eyes, I am resolved to amend. I will offer up my prayers, with an earnest

desire of obtaining what I ask. Free, as far as in my power, from distractions, I will pour forth my soul in acts of adoration, and lay before thee my daily wants. I will use my best endeavours to approach thy sacraments, purely for the sake of improving myself in thy service: all my actions shall be directed to thy glory: I will continually advance in virtue, and never think that I have done enough: *humour, custom, or inclination* shall not henceforward be the sole motives of my actions. These are my resolutions. But, O God, strengthen them by thy grace, or they will be ineffectual.

Examine yourselves, and resolve to surmount all pernicious lukewarmness by the observance of the following rules: Frequently meditate on the truths of eternity:—beg of God to increase your faith:—withdraw your affections from the things of this world:—be not mislead by the example of others:—contemplate the life of Christ and his saints.

#### ON DESPAIR.

*July 17.]*—WHAT, if our crimes appear before our eyes in hideous shapes? What, if multitudes of past offences crowd into our minds, and oppress our heavy thoughts by their unhappy weight? Shall we therefore despair? Shall we despair, when we know that we have a God omnipotent—a God most merciful—a God, who can and will help us, if *we* please? God *can* help us, because nothing is impossible to him: his power, like himself, is every way infinite. If our minds are overpowered by melancholy or dejecting thoughts; if we labour under the violence of formidable temptations; if our resolutions have hitherto frequently failed us; if our souls seem to be blind, deaf, and dumb, God can heal and raise them. He has given many instances of this his power; and is his arm shortened? “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”—Matt. viii. I ask nothing but what is easy to thee.

God *will* help us. He is a God of mercy: his mercy is above all his works. "He wills not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live."—Ezech. xxxiii. He calls, he entreats, he presses us to return to him, with these words: "Why will you die, O house of Israel?"—Ibid. He came from heaven to redeem us: he led a painful life, to redeem us: he died upon a cross, to redeem us. And can we despair? O Lord, "a contrite and humble heart thou wilt never despise."—Ps. l. Thou didst not despise the repentance of the men of Ninive, nor the repentance of Manasses: thou didst not despise the tears of Peter, nor of the repentant persecutor Saul, nor yet the tears of Magdalen: thou didst not despise the humility of the publican, nor of the thief on the cross.

Christians, are we sinners? Let us remember the publican. Are we immersed in worldly pleasures? Let us reflect on Magdalen. Have we denied our faith? Let us remember Peter. Have we murdered the reputation of a neighbour? Let us look on the good thief. Have we persecuted Jesus by a sinful life? Let us think on Paul.

Examine yourselves, and take care you dash not on the rock of despair. Remember, that this was the unhappy lot of Judas. Remember, likewise, that it is the most insupportable torment of the damned. Trust in the mercy and power of God, who can and is always willing to assist you. Implore this grace in your daily prayers.

#### ON PRESUMPTION.

*July 18.*—SHALL I presume, who am a grievous sinner? Can I delude myself with the hopes of heaven, while I live in sin? Can I sin without remorse, as if there were not an all-seeing God to witness my works? or a just God to judge them at the bar of his tribunal? How many thousands have been condemned to the flames of hell, for presuming like myself!

God is *all-seeing*: nothing escapes his adorable eye: he beholds the most hidden secrets of our hearts. He is a *just* God: he would not be God, if he were not just. The dreadful effects of his provoked justice too visibly appear. It was his justice that threw the rebel angels into the pit of hell. It was his justice that inflicted the general curse on Adam and his posterity. It was his justice that abandoned Saul: and it is his justice, that every hour condemns to hell great numbers of souls. O Lord, "how unsearchable are thy ways! how incomprehensible thy judgments."—Rom. xi. Alas! amidst such terrifying judgments, who can presume.

Did we reflect on the difficulties which always occur in the conversion of a sinner; how insupportable they are to weak nature, and how indispensably necessary is the grace of God, to enable him to surmount them—did we again consider, that the more we sin, the farther we are off from deserving this grace, we should see that we have no reason to presume. Did we reflect on those terrible gospel truths: "many are called, but few are chosen;" (Matt. xxii.) "the gate that leads to life is narrow, and few there are that find it;" (Matt. vii.) we should see that we have no reason to presume. Did we reflect how many millions, that are now living, are preparing for destruction, and that it is uncertain what our own lot will be, we should see that we have no reason to presume. If that great saint, David, was not able to endure the prospect of his past sins, although few in number, and sincerely repented of, can we look unconcernedly at our repeated and unrepented of crimes? Can we sin on, under a foolish presumption that we shall be saved in the end?

Examine yourselves, and "work out your salvation with fear and trembling."—Phil. ii. Beg of God to give you this fear: it is his gift; and it is the *beginning of wisdom*. It is the most effectual means of humbling presumption. Pray, therefore, with David: "Pierce, O Lord, my flesh with a hopeful fear."—Ps. cxviii.

## ON THE SCANDALOUS SINNER.

*July 19.]*—"WOE be to the world by reason of scandals: woe to the man, by whom scandal is given: it were better for him that a mill-stone were hung about his neck, and that he were cast into the sea, than scandalize the least of my little ones."—Matt. xviii. What is the meaning of all this? Can the Saviour of the world utter these dreadful woes? He came for the redemption of man; and does he pronounce his judgments in these severe terms? It is not half what the scandalous sinner deserves.

The scandalous sinner ruins himself. But this is not all: what the devil cannot effect by his malicious artifices, he does for him. He corrupts the innocent life of his neighbour: he robs him of grace: he deprives him of heaven, and, anti-christian-like, he involves him with himself in a miserable damnation. Good God, deliver me from this unfortunate blindness. May my life be edifying to every neighbour. It would be a most dreadful thing to lose my own soul: but, to take part with Satan in destroying innocence, what can be more execrable?

Christian, be not thus cruel in persecuting, by thy scandals, the tender flock of Jesus Christ. Make not void, by ill example, or sinful allurements, that sacred blood, which thy blessed Redeemer has so generously shed for us. Thy neighbour is the image of the living God, created to be happy with the saints and angels; and wilt thou dare to deface this sacred image, and by criminal importunities tear from heaven so many poor souls, who would otherwise be saved.

Examine yourselves, and if you have been guilty of this crying sin, wipe it off by a timely repentance. By a virtuous life, repair all damages; and by your pious labours, strive to gain as many souls to heaven, as you may have torn from it by your impious scandals.

## ON THE SIN OF SCANDAL.

*July 20.*—THE sin of scandal has been the destruction of more souls, than all the sermons, exhortations, or zealous labours of the most apostolic men, have at any time saved. I say more: the blood, death, and merits of Jesus; the healing sacraments of the church; the divine inspirations of the Holy Ghost; all the instruments of salvation, make but few happy souls, in comparison of the vast numbers that are lost through scandal. Lord! what shall I do, who am guilty of this sin?

Look into the world, and see how many are there corrupted by bad example, by impure discourses, by immodest actions. See how many are drawn into a habit of swearing, or drunkenness, or seduced into a life of debauchery. See how many, led away by example, rail against devotion, cry down virtue, and by detestable impieties, make war upon innocence. Does it not evidently appear, that the far greatest part of the world is lost through scandal?

Pastors, what example have you given to your flocks? and parents, what have you given to your children? Masters, how edifying has your comportment been to your servants? and servants, is your conduct towards each other according to the rules of morality? Do you not, by impious discourses, or a wicked life, sow the seeds of sin in one another's souls? What can we say of ourselves? have we not been too free in our words, indecent in our actions, lavish in expenses, too prone to anger, and dissolved in the luxuries of ease, and of an irregular life? All this is scandal.

Examine yourselves, and let it be your principal care to avoid this sin; conceive an utter detestation of it; be ever on your guard, and remember, that there is not a soul damned through scandal, but what cries, louder than the blood of an innocent Abel, against him from whom the scandal came.



Ah! be not so inhuman as to “destroy those souls for which Christ died.”—Rom. xiv.

ON THE DANGER OF A RELAPSE.

*July 21.*]—“THE latter condition of that man is made worse than the former.”—Matt. xii. This is certainly true of the first relapse. And if so, in what an unhappy state must they be, whose lives are a perpetual rise and fall? When supporting grace is farther and farther removed from them; when their passions are grown stronger and stronger; when to their other crimes are added black ingratitude, contempt, and perfidiousness; when the devil has entered and has re-entered into them with redoubled force, may it not be confidently said, that their state is desperate, and that they are marching on in the broad way of final impenitence?

It is in relapses of the soul, as in those of the body; if the suitable remedies are neglected, the case is desperate. The relapsing sinner, for a while, pours forth his soul in humble prayer; but he soon grows disgusted with that sober exercise. He makes his confession: but he does not effectually resolve to avoid the occasions of sin. He meditates on the important affair of salvation: but it is only for a few days. He receives the blessed sacrament, but it is not with the pure intention of being rendered pure and holy by it. Alas! if these, and a thousand other helps, through the negligent manner in which they are made use of, did not prevent his falling, how will they lift him up again, and settle him in the practice of good? Truly, he stands in need of a great grace from God, and of a faithful correspondence on his part, to work his cure.

O God! pardon my relapses; I see my ingratitude and grievous contempt in slighting the merciful graces of thy sacraments, and I am confounded at it. I know that it is very difficult for my relapsing soul to rise again by a sincere

repentance. However, I confide in the bowels of thy mercy, firmly resolving never to return more to the vomit of sin.

Examine yourselves, and see whether, in the practice of your lives, you keep clear of this dangerous rock, on which so many souls unfortunately perish. In your daily prayers, importune heaven for the grace of perseverance. Embrace the pious resolutions of St. Paul: "Who shall separate us from the law of Christ? Shall tribulation? persecution? or the sword?"—Rom. viii. No: nothing shall effect it.

#### ON THE RELAPSING SINNER.

*July 22.]*—THE relapsing sinner is ungrateful; he is perfidious. Should a rebel, condemned to die, find pardon for his crimes, on having recourse to his offended sovereign, would it not be a crime of the blackest dye were he to return again to his evil practices? This, however, is the case with the relapsing sinner. By a mortal sin, he offends his God: by that very act he is condemned to the flames of hell: he becomes sensible of his unhappy lot, and has recourse to the blood of Christ in the holy sacraments. He receives the effects of them: his sentence is reversed: he is restored to favour. And yet, O monstrous ingratitude, he returns to his sins: and putting God and the devil into the scales, "he gives the preference to the devil."—*Tertul.*

Christians, can the malice of man reach to such a pitch? Can he thus contemptibly undervalue the grace of pardon? O Jesus! grant that it may never be our lot; grant that we may never prove so very ungrateful.

The relapsing sinner is likewise *perfidious*. He goes to confession: he renounces his sins at the feet of the priest: he promises to forsake his evil ways: he engages to enter into the ways of salvation: he calls heaven and earth to witness this promise—I confess to Almighty God. He appeals to the

saints and angels, to the queen of saints, the Virgin Mother : he appeals to the minister of Christ to bear evidence to his promise, *and to you, father*. And yet, for a mere trifle, he violates this solemn and binding protestation. O unchristian perfidiousness ! is it possible, that a filthy passion should make men traitors to such a solemn promise ?

Examine yourselves, and see whether or not this is your unhappy misfortune. Resolve never more to return, like dogs, to the vomit ; renew these resolutions every day of your lives. Remember, how ungrateful, how wretchedly perfidious the relapsing sinner is : think on the judgment he draws on himself, and be resolved never again to give the devil an opportunity of boasting, that he has frustrated the effects of the mercies of God.

#### ON RASH JUDGMENT.

*July 23.*]—"JUDGE not, and you shall not be judged : condemn not, and you shall not be condemned."—Luke, vi. It is the prerogative of God alone to judge man : because no one but God can search the heart. It is the essential right of his supreme sovereignty, and, therefore, it cannot be claimed by any creature, without doing him the greatest injustice. He has established, indeed, a spiritual and temporal court of judicature here on earth, but these are for no other purpose than to administer *his* justice ; the administrators are always to appeal to the justice of heaven. O God, suffer me not to usurp thy divine attributes, by *judging* my neighbour : permit me not to expose myself to thy anger by such rash proceedings : I have already too much reason to fear thy judgments.

Why do we rashly "judge another man's servant," when it is "to his own master that he must stand or fall?"—Rom. xiv. Why do we lessen, upon weak surmises, that esteem which he has a right to demand of us ? This is not loving our neighbour as ourselves : this is not paying a just regard to

the image of God, nor to the redeeming blood of Christ. On the contrary, it argues a want of charity, if not a proud and malicious heart. We shall have to repent it sooner or later, and perhaps when it is too late. We shall one day be called to account for those uncharitable censures, which we now make so light of.

Supposing that we see a person doing a thing which in appearance is evil: can we tell his intention? May it not be done out of a good motive? May it not be the effect of indiscretion, or inadvertence? May he not be innocent in the sight of God? He may: and shall we condemn him? Good Lord, deliver us from this crying injustice.

Examine yourselves, and put your own hearts in order; for it is from that malignant source that this evil flows. Put the best construction on your neighbour's actions, for the law of God requires it. Turn your eyes upon your own consciences; you will find enough there both to judge and condemn.

#### ON DETRACTION.

*July 24.*—OH! that we had some of the burning coal of the holy altar, to purify the lips of men from this spreading sin! At every blow it gives three mortal wounds: it wounds the soul of the detractor, the reputation of the detracted, and the consciences of the hearers. And yet how general a vice it is! There is hardly any company, in which our neighbour's reputation is not torn to pieces, and his tender name made the subject of every table-talk. It infects the tongues of those who are reputed good: it pries into monasteries, and the most religious places. What is our behaviour? Do not our consciences reprove us in this respect?

Restitution must be made for the injuries done by scandal. But how seldom is this thought on? Alas! how many die without thinking at all about it! O God, deliver us from this unhappy sin, which thus crowds hell with innumerable souls.

Christians, what are you doing? Will you, by your slanders, rob your brother of his *good name*, more dear to him than life? What would you think of the loss of your own reputation by slander? Would you hold him guiltless who had committed that crime against you? “Do as you would be done by:” (Luke, vi.) and remember that those cruel thorns, which pierced our Saviour’s head; that lance, which opened his side; those nails, which bored his hands and feet, did not so bitterly afflict his suffering heart, as did the detractions and slanders which the malice of the Jews heaped upon him.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour by every means to avoid this sin, which has been the utter destruction of many souls. Take care that you impute not crimes to your neighbour falsely, for this is scandal: never disclose his secret sins, unless it is for his benefit: for this would be detraction. Shun the company of the detractor as much as possible: for “the venom of asps is under his lips.”—Ps. xiii.

#### ON ST. JAMES.

*July. 25.]*—St. James the Great, the son of Zebedee and the brother of St. John the Evangelist, was one of the first that were called to the apostleship by Jesus Christ. No sooner did he hear the call, than, leaving his father, his nets, and all, with his brother John, he followed Christ. How often, and by how many ways, has God called upon us, and we are still deaf to his calls! But why need we wonder at it, when we reflect how entangled our hearts are in the nets of the world! Can we expect to have the power of serving God and the world at the same time? “No man can serve two masters.”—Matt. vi. Let us, then, imitate St. James, by withdrawing our affections from a vain world.

St. James was one of those apostles whom the Lord loved most. He made him an eye-witness of his glorious transfiguration, and his other miracles: he accompanied his

Lord to Mount Olivet, where he began his passion. Must there not be something extraordinary in this apostle, to deserve a particular love of Jesus? No doubt but his heart was full of faith, love, humility, and all Christian virtues. Let us imitate him.

St. James preached the gospel in Judea and Samaria, where he converted many to the Christian faith. It is said that he then went into Spain, where he plentifully sowed the seeds of the gospel: and that he afterwards returned to Jerusalem. There it was that he was put to death by Herod Agrippa. The axe was the instrument of his martyrdom; and he was the first of the apostles that suffered death for Christ? Have we the courage and resolution of this illustrious apostle? Can we say that we are ready to die for Christ, when we can suffer nothing patiently for his sake? Does our supine slothfulness in the service of God correspond with the labours of this glorious saint? Do we imitate his zeal for the salvation of souls when we injure our neighbour and bear malice against him in our hearts? Blessed St. James, intercede for us to our common Lord: it is an honour to you that you were the first of the apostles that sealed your doctrine with your blood.

Examine yourselves, and labour to imitate the virtues of this apostle. On this day of his festival address yourselves fervently to him, and beg his intercession. The best way of honouring him is to follow his example.

#### ON ST. ANN.

*July 26.*]—St. Ann was doubly a mother to the blessed Virgin Mary: namely, by *birth* and *education*. She brought her into the world, after many years of barrenness. She instructed our Lady in all the duties of religion: she gave her lessons of humility, love, charity, patience, prayer, and true resignation; which lessons she ever after inviolably practised. Nothing was wanting in St. Ann of the tenderness, care, or

prudence of a mother in every respect; although her greatest concern was to consecrate her daughter to Almighty God.

Parents, learn here the extent of your duties towards your children: learn of St. Ann how to bring them up in the fear of God. Have you, like her, consecrated your children to heaven? Do you, by word and example, give them lessons of piety? Are they kept to their duties? Are they not injured by an immoderate fondness? Remember that you are to give an account of the souls of your children. What a pity it is that souls should perish through the neglect of parents, after they have taken such pains to bring them up in the world!

Christians, we have all of us great reason, on this day, to praise our Lord for the wonders of his mercies in this saint, whom, of all women in the world, he deemed the most worthy to bring forth the immaculate Mother of God. Ah! to what a pitch of grace was this saint raised! the produce of whose womb, God himself chose and sanctified for his tabernacle! O blessed Root! from which the branch of Jesse sprung, whose bud and flower was no other than the sweetest Saviour of mankind.

Examine yourselves, and in all your wants, crave the assistance of blessed St. Ann. Imitate her patience in the time of her barrenness: imitate her humility, and her love of God: imitate her virtues, and you will obtain her favour. Say often, from your hearts: "Holy St. Ann, mother of Mary, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

#### ON SWEARING.

*July 27.*—“HE that swears much shall be filled with iniquity.”—Eccl. xxiii. And yet, there is not a sin that is more common, than this of swearing. How many are come to that degree of impiety, as to prostitute, on every occasion, the holy name of God for the vilest purposes? Not a day

passes, but our ears are assailed with the most horrid oaths: the streets, the shops, the taverns ring with them: they are the dismal effects of almost every disappointment. Is this to act like Christians? Does not God forbid us "to take his name in vain?"—Exod. xx. Does not Christ say: "Swear not at all."—Matt. v.

The name of God is a name the most sacred: it is a name the most terrible: the angels tremble at the sound thereof: all the heavenly spirits fall down and adore it. And shall we abuse it?—we, who have been favoured with the greatest mercies? Ah! let us not employ our tongues in any other way, than in recounting the mercies of our good God, in magnifying his goodness, in calling for relief in all threatening dangers.

The unhappy Baltassar had his destiny drawn upon the walls of his palace, for profaning the vessels of the temple consecrated to God. And shall they escape the divine judgments, who, with polluted lips, stick not to profane his most holy name? No: every oath that they pronounced, shall rise in judgment against them: it shall demand vengeance before the tribunal of heaven, where there shall be nothing heard but cries of despair, instead of those of repentance.

Examine yourselves, and conceive a thorough detestation of the sin of swearing. Take care of "scandalizing any of these little ones, for it would be better that a mill-stone were hung about your neck, and you were cast into the sea."—Luke, xvii. By prayer and penitential works make amends for past abuses. Take not the name of God in vain on trivial occasions; but always pronounce it with respect and decency.

#### ON CURSING.

*July 28.*]—THIS sin may be committed three several ways; by cursing God—by cursing ourselves—by cursing our



neighbours. One would think that it would be impossible for a creature to curse God, even if the greatest misfortunes befel him—even if his life were nothing but a scene of misery, or even if he had fallen into the gulph of rage and despair. What! curse God! that God, who created him to his own likeness, and who has redeemed him with his precious blood? What! curse that God, whom heaven adores, who is the bliss of angels, who can, at the very moment, strike him into the bottomless abyss of hell! No: none but devils can do it; and those wicked spirits, who in bitter rage shall curse and blaspheme for all eternity.

Alas! we live in a miserable world. We are encompassed on all sides with blood-thirsty enemies. When we fall, we fall a sacrifice to them. And shall we, after all, by curses on ourselves, join with them in procuring our destruction? We do not desire to be flayed alive, to be roasted at a slow fire, or to be cut in pieces. And yet, can we call on merciless devils, or the flames of hell to burn our souls? Let us dread such madness. If the world, by so doing, chooses to draw on itself an eternal curse, let us avoid it.

We are under an obligation of loving our neighbours. We are bound to do good to those who hate us: but is this done by curses? Ah! let us not inhumanly curse those for whom Christ mercifully shed his blood. Let us not curse those souls, the conversion of which gives joy to the whole court of heaven. Let us not curse our own flesh, or our own members. Rather let us die, than be guilty of this barbarity.

Examine yourselves, and be careful to shun this unchristian sin. It is a great pity that it should be so common. Take care that you curse not even dumb creatures: for this would be folly and scandal, the effect only of an impatient and a corrupt heart. Fly the company of all these offenders. Reprehend the faulty, for this is the duty of every Christian.

## ON REPENTANCE.

*July 29.*]—THERE are only two ways that lead to heaven—the way of innocence, and the way of repentance. If we go not by the first way, we must take the second: “Every sinner must repent, or burn,” says St. Chrysostom. We have sufficient opportunities offered; and why do we neglect them? A self-denial—a truly penitential tear, what will it not effect? “A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt never despise.”—Ps. l.

Repentance appears severe, when viewed at a distance. It seems to be nothing but a series of tears and self-denials: it presents no other prospect but combats and temptations: it promises nothing but labours and difficulties: and it suggests the idea, that perhaps all that may be done may be made ineffectual by a relapse. But, if we draw the prospect nearer, we shall discover that this is all a delusion: we shall discover that repentance is comfortable, and accompanied with a delight which far surpasses its seeming difficulties. If it be a sad misfortune to provoke God by a mortal sin, how great must be the comfort to be reconciled by repentance! If it be a subject of bitter grief to lose God, what a comfort must it be to possess him by repentance! If it be an unhappiness to the sinner to be a slave to his passions, and to be tormented by the recollection of his past crimes; what an unspeakable comfort it must be, to see his crimes effaced, and his conscience appeased by a sincere repentance!

Are you in sin? *Repent.* Have you neglected the concerns of eternity? *Repent.* Have you divided your hearts between God and the world? *Repent.* “There is joy in heaven at the repentance of a sinner.”—Luke, xv.

Examine yourselves, and see if your repentance has been sincere. It is not enough to say that, *you repent*: your lives must show it. Many deceive themselves in this respect. If

they strike their breasts, and say: "Lord be merciful to me a sinner;" (Luke, xviii.) if they hastily pronounce an act of contrition that they find in their prayer books, they conclude that the work is done. But, alas! it is to be feared that they are too often deceived.

#### ON THE DELAY OF REPENTANCE.

*July 30.]*—"HE, who has promised pardon to those who repent, has never promised time for repentance to those who defer it."—*St. Gregory*. One of the most crafty artifices of the devil to keep an unhappy soul in his possession, and one of the most dangerous errors that we can fall into, is, the *deferring our repentance* from time to time, till time is no more for us. It is an error the most *pernicious*, because it is in a matter of the highest concern: and it is an error the most *impious*, because it proceeds, not from ignorance, surprise, or inadvertence, but from downright malice.

Should a man's house take fire, and were a friend to run in, and give him notice, before the spreading flame had laid hold of the main timber, it would be a proof of the most consummate folly, were that man to reply, "There is no hurry: let it burn on till it has reached the foundation, and then fetch the engines." The case is similar to that of the delaying sinner. His soul is in a flame with a long habit of sin: it is burnt up with lawless passions, more raging than fire. He is advised to repent. He cannot at present: let the fire first sink into the bottom of his soul, and then he will think of it. Unhappy soul! is it an uneasy thing to return to thy offended God? Is it a cruel separation to be delivered from the fetters of thy passions, from the slavery of the devil, and from the precipice of hell? Be not thus deceived.

But thou wilt repent hereafter. Thou fool! how dost thou know thou wilt live till this hereafter cometh? or that thou wilt repent when it doth come? Hast thou times and moments

at thy own disposal? How canst thou be thus presumptuous! The damned in hell said that they would repent *hereafter*: but they did not do it. How dost thou know but thy lot may be the same? Nothing provokes God more than an impenitent heart.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved to follow the advice of the Holy Ghost: "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day."—Eccl. v. Remember that a Christian has no certainty of a *to-morrow*. Let the wretched delay of the damned in hell, be a powerful inducement to move you to a speedy and effectual repentance.

#### ON A DEATH-BED REPENTANCE.

*July 31.*]—A TRUE change of heart is a work of the greatest difficulty. It is impossible to wash an Ethiopian white, or to take off the natural spots from a leopard's skin: so, likewise, it is impossible for the *habitual* sinner to convert himself to God, unless assisted by an extraordinary grace. If this be the case at all times, what are we to think of the *dying* sinner, when his body is tortured by the acute pangs of his disease—when his spirits are spent—when his strength is worn out—when his soul is torn to pieces by a thousand distracting thoughts—when his whole self is struck with dismay at the horrid recollection of his past sins, and at the prospect of a fatal eternity: what are we to think of him at that awful moment? Have we not reason to suspect the sincerity of his repentance? and to say that it is not he who forsakes sin, but that sin forsakes him.

What good effect will be produced, if the priest induces him to say: "Lord have mercy on my soul!" or if he be prevailed on to strike his breast, or kiss a crucifix? Will anything of this kind profit him, if his heart be not sincerely converted to the Lord, and his soul animated with a true love for God? Will it make amends for his loss of time? for his spending it

in sin? Will it make satisfaction for his neglect of the sacraments, and of the inspirations, graces, and calls of his merciful Lord? Will it atone for the multiplied sins of his past life? Ah! well will it be for him, if that commination of our blessed Lord be not here too truly verified: "I go away, and you shall seek me, and you shall die in your sins."—John, viii.

Sin is to be overcome by the practice of virtue. The proud man must become humble—the lustful, chaste—the passionate, meek—the slothful, fervent. Now, unless there be an extraordinary grace of God, seldom granted, can this be done in a moment? How can he make, in so short a time, and in such an afflicted state, that due examination of conscience? how will he be able to excite in his soul that hearty contrition, or what strength will he have to make that sincere confession, which the sacrament of penance requires? Ah! it is much to be feared, that, as the sinner forgot God in his life, so likewise, at his death, he will forget himself.

Examine yourselves, and timely resolve upon entering on the business of repentance. Let it be accompanied with effectual resolutions of amendment. Watch, and study all the motions of your hearts; what passions are most predominant, and what inclinations are most in unison with them; that so you may be the better able to subdue them by an early repentance.

#### ON RESOLUTIONS OF AMENDMENT.

*Aug. 1.]*—THE restless enemies of mankind, who continually lie in wait for our souls; the natural corruption, and imperfections of our hearts; our insufficiency to perform, and our coldness in performing what is required for salvation, are proofs of the necessity of repeated resolutions to live a virtuous life: thinking and resolving ought to go together; for there is no attaining heaven without them both.

It is for want of true resolution, that the greater number of men unfortunately lose their all, by relapsing into sin, and by living in sin. It is for want of a good resolution, that the better sort of Christians experience a discouraging coldness in the practice of virtue, make small improvement, and are as subject as ever to multiplied failings. Look into monasteries. How comes it that so many thousands there have left the world, and entered upon a course of severe penance? Their resolutions encouraged them. What caused the martyrs to lay down their lives? their good resolutions. What fills heaven with glorious saints? good resolutions.

What are our resolutions? Are they not like our prayers; in general terms only? Are they not weak and imperfect resolutions? These will not do. No: they must be serious, strong, and entire, like those of the saints, if we hope to have a part in their happiness. Heaven is the reward of resolutions begun on earth. We must resolve to shun sin, and embrace virtue, to spend our time well, and refrain from all our failings, or we shall not obtain it.

Examine yourselves, and stand to your resolutions. Renew them daily, and say, with David: "Now I begin."—Ps. lxxvi. Let no circumstances of life be a hinderance to you. Let this be your prayer: "Help me, O Lord, in my good purposes, and in thy holy services: and grant that I may perfectly begin now, since what I have hitherto done is nothing."—*Foll. of Ch. l. i. c. 19.*

#### ON THE NECESSITY OF GOOD WORKS.

*Aug. 2.]*—To be saved, we must believe: and this must be, not with a dead and inactive faith, but with "a faith working by charity in Jesus Christ."—Gal. v. "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he only, who doth the will of my Father who is in heaven."—Matt. vii. "Cut down the unfruitful tree, why

doth it stand?"—Luke, xiii. "The unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness."—Matt. xxv. "Go ye cursed, into eternal fire, because I have been hungry, and ye gave me not to eat."—Ibid. The five foolish virgins were excluded from the nuptials of the spouse, because their lamps were not furnished with the oil of good works. A severe sentence of condemnation was passed on the man who improved not his talent, but hid it in the earth. Are not these texts, and instances, taken from the gospel, convincing proofs of the necessity of good works? Why then do we not perform them?

How many Christians are there, who, like the barren fig-tree, content themselves with the leaves of good works without bearing fruit? who have the appearance of piety, but not the substance? How many believe themselves to be truly virtuous, although their works are but the effects of natural constitution, education, honour, or such like human motives? How many flatter themselves, that they are entitled to the character of innocence, merely because they are not publicly criminal in the eyes of the world; although, at the same time they are continually seeking after worldly comforts, and leading an unprofitable life? Will not these be justly amazed, when, appearing at the bar of the all-seeing Judge, they shall find written in the books that their virtues were no better than the virtues of Pagans, and that their lives were totally devoid of good?

O God! let not that day be terrible to me. Let me be prepared for it by a life spent in the practice of good works, and of every Christian virtue: for I know, that what I have sown, the same also shall I reap?—Gal. vi.

Examine yourselves, and be constant in the practice of good works. Confine them not within bounds; but persevere to the end: for thus only shall you be crowned. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, refer all to the glory of God."—1 Cor. x.

## ON A PURE INTENTION.

*Aug. 3.]*—By our creation, redemption, and a thousand other titles, we belong to God; and therefore, all that we do, ought in justice to be done for him. As he is the beginning, so likewise ought he to be the end of all our thoughts, words, and actions. Jesus Christ sought not his own glory, but that of his Father. Do we seek no other than the glory of God? Are all our works purely directed to this object.

Our salvation does not depend upon the doing good works, but upon doing them well. Were I to give my substance to the poor, or my body to the flames, and was not animated with a right motive, it would profit me nothing. The widow's two mites were more acceptable to God, than the large alms of the Scribes and Pharisees: because she gave them with a more pure heart, being guided, not by pride or vanity, but by the desire of promoting the honour of God, and her neighbour's relief. Yes: it is a good intention that stamps a value on our works: actions that would otherwise be mean and indifferent, are rendered, by it, capable of meriting a crown in heaven.

O God! I am convinced, that a *pure intention* is the very soul of good works. I know that it is the heart, and not the hand, that thou regardest. Where then can be the difficulty in offering it to thee, who art the joy of angels? I bless thy goodness for providing me such easy means of salvation: and I acknowledge that I should deserve to be most miserable were I unhappily to neglect it. Thou shalt be the object of my thoughts, the subject of my words, the end of all my actions. I will not sacrifice them to idols, but will give them all to thee. I will desire nothing but thy glory.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved that, “whether you eat, or drink, or sleep, or wake, or whatever else you do,” you will do “all for the glory of God.”—1 Cor. x. Suffer not a



morning to pass by, without offering all the actions of the day to this end. Guard against all unworthy motives: be animated by a pure intention in all your actions, and they will be found worthy of an eternal reward.

## ON HUMAN RESPECTS.

*Aug. 4.*]—"TAKE heed that you do not your works before men, to be seen by them."—Matt. vi. It is a pity that a good action should lose its value, for want of a pure intention. There are a great many Christians, who are liberal to the poor, who are patient, meek, chaste, and temperate, who are addicted to prayer, and rigorous fasts, who frequent the sacraments, and observe an edifying regularity in their lives. And will all these have a reward in heaven? Are none of them led away by *humour, vanity, and ambition*? Are there none that seek after the applauses of the world? Alas! it is much to be feared that many of them are guided by these unworthy motives.

The Scribes and Pharisees were liberal enough in their alms; but it was with trumpets sounding before them. They loved to pray at the corners of the streets, that they might be seen by men. They disfigured their faces, in order to appear to the world to be fasting. Therefore, their foolish pride was their reward, and the cause of their punishment. "The hopes of the hypocrite shall perish."—Job, viii. God declares that he detests his conduct. He may at present deceive the world: but it will not be so at the last day, when the *searcher of hearts* shall unfold all their hidden secrets.

O God, give me the grace to act always with a pure intention. Remove all human respects from my heart. Let not vanity or worldly interest influence my actions. Let me not thus labour and toil in vain. Let me not unjustly give to Satan the fruit of a tree that belongs solely to thee.

Examine yourselves, and always labour to avoid vain-glory.

It is a subtle enemy, that will despoil you of the merit of your whole lives. Seek no other witness, nor any other reward of your labours, but God alone. In all your undertakings say, from your hearts: *God's will be done.* Say, with St. Paul: "If I desire to please men, I shall not be a servant of Jesus Christ."—Gal. i.

#### ON WHAT THE WORLD WILL SAY.

*Aug. 5.]*—How many Christians are now lamenting in the flames of hell, because out of a shameful fear of what the world would say, they abandoned the cause of Jesus Christ! Alas! it is one of the most destructive artifices that the devil employs to ruin souls. How many are there who cannot think of appearing humble, lest the world should laugh at them? How many, who cannot find in their hearts to forgive injuries, or put up with an affront, for fear of being reputed dastardly cowards? how many, who will not pray, nor endeavour by penitential labours to work out their salvation, for fear of being pointed at by a corrupt world? Alas! may we not say, that all these are ashamed of the gospel, because the world calls it folly?

Christians, is it not strange that we should all believe in a crucified God, and yet blush to serve him? Shall we be ashamed to be placed at his right hand at the day of judgment? and how can we blush to stand by him now? What charms are there in this vain world to captivate our hearts? Or, what obligations have we to it? Was it not God, who created us out of nothing, who redeemed us by his blood, and who continues to bestow upon us in abundance all the blessings that we receive? Did we not, at the sacred font, solemnly engage to renounce the world, and all its cheating vanities? Certainly we did: how comes it then that we suffer these things so easily to usurp the place of God in our hearts?

Let us not regard the censures of the world, but let us attend solely to what God commands; for it is his word that must save our souls. However much the world may endeavour to disquiet our thoughts, we will give no heed to it: its malicious constructions shall never cause us to neglect our duty. Let the world, if it will, call us fools, we will esteem its followers no better than madmen.

Examine yourselves, and let these be your constant resolutions. Be not slaves to a restless world; for it is impossible to please it. Remember, that whosoever is ashamed of Christ and his doctrine, "of him will the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his glory."—Luke, ix. Say, with St. Paul: "I blush not at the gospel, but I glory in the cross of Jesus Christ."—Rom. xi.

#### ON DIVINE INSPIRATIONS.

*Aug. 6.]*—ALMIGHTY God inspires us with his graces many different ways: sometimes by the exhortations of his ministers; at other times, by putting pious books into our hands—by admitting us to the sacraments—by the good advice and example of the virtuous—by instances of his justice—and, almost every day of our lives, by secret inspirations. And are we deaf to them all? Will they not rise up against us, and condemn our hardened, our ungrateful neglect?

As often as we stifle the inspirations of God, so often do we become rebels to the light; we sin against the Holy Ghost: we throw ourselves into the jaws of destruction. Had not the three Kings followed the light of the star, they might have perished in their infidelity. Nothing more exasperates God than this supine neglect of his holy inspirations. Ah! let us embrace them as the richest pledges of an excessive love.

O my soul, be no longer rebellious to the light: be not so wretchedly ungrateful as to shut thy heart against the voice

of God. He calls upon thee now change thy life, to do penance for thy sins, to embrace virtue: make no delay: "to-day, if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts."—Ps. xcv.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved never to turn away from the inspirations of God. "Extinguish not the spirit:" (1 Thess. v.) for the more you do this, the greater will be your condemnation. Whenever you hear the secret voice of God calling upon you, cry aloud, with Samuel: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."—1 Sam. iii. Regulate your lives according to the interior light that is imparted to you. Imitate the industrious gardener, who thinks it not enough to plant his trees, but labours all he can that they may bring forth fruit.

#### ON RECOLLECTION OF SPIRIT.

*Aug. 7.]*—THE merchant is perpetually thinking about his traffic, and the mechanic about his trade: the gentleman has his thoughts fixed upon his temporal concerns, an hundred times a day: and shall not we sometimes employ our thoughts on heaven? Our thoughts are frequently fixed on the things we love, and we are never so well pleased, as when they are so engaged; neither business nor company can then interrupt them. Is it so when we think of God? Do not the affairs of this world stifle every such thought? Ah! this is a certain sign that our love is cold.

My soul, where art thou? Thy proper place is God; and why dost thou not fix thy thoughts upon him? He is always looking at thee with an incomparable love: and wilt thou pay no attention to it? Be not so ungrateful. Form a place of retirement in thy heart, where, recollecting thy thoughts, thou mayest recreate thyself amidst the hurry of the world, and converse in heaven.

St. Catherine of Sienna, and divers other saints, were daily accustomed to make this retreat. Here, as in a strong

castle, they remained secure: neither threats nor disappointments gave them the least disturbance: no worldly pleasures were able to make them forget God. While their hands were at work, their thoughts were in heaven. David testifies of himself that this was his constant exercise: "Lord, as for me, I am always with thee. I have lifted up my eyes to thee, O God, who dwellest in heaven."—Ps. cxxii. Are we more engaged in worldly affairs than was this great king?

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to practise this recollection, upon which your advancement in piety so much depends. In order thereto, make a little oratory in your hearts, into which you may retire from time to time, and there happily promote your eternal good.

#### ON PIOUS EJACULATIONS.

*Aug. 8.]*—It is a clear demonstration that Almighty God made this world for our service, since everything that is in it, or that happens in it, may contribute to advance us towards heaven. St. Francis of Assisium, seeing a little lamb devoured by a hog: "Ah! sweet creature," said he, "how lively dost thou represent my Saviour's death!" "I wonder," said St. Francis Borgia, "that the hawk should come to hand, and suffer himself to be tied to the perch, and that men should be such rebels to the voice of God." St. Francis, praying on the banks of a pleasant brook, made this ejaculation: "Thy grace, O my God, flows as sweetly as does this little river." Another, seeing a tree finely beautified with blossoms, made this complaint: "Lord, why am I alone without blossom in the garden of thy church?" Do we thus raise our thoughts and affections to God? Do we make such a good use of his creatures? Or rather, do we not unhappily make them the occasions of sin?

Let us apply to God by repeated and pious ejaculations of heart. Let us extol his wonders. Let us stretch forth our

hands to him for help, as a child to his father. Let us throw ourselves at the foot of his cross. Let us lodge him in our breasts as a most odoriferous perfume.

“My Lord and my God!”—John, xx. “O God of my heart, and my portion for ever.”—Ps. lxxii. “As the hart pants after the fountains of water, so does my soul thirst after thee.”—Ps. xli. “Put me as a seal upon thy heart.”—Cant. viii. “How delightful are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!”—Ps. lxxxiii. O Blessed Virgin, Mother of my God, pray for me. My good angel, pity and protect me. O my holy patrons, intercede for me before the throne of mercy.

Examine yourselves, and let these, or such like ejaculations, be your daily exercise. The main business of a Christian life consists in these pious practices. It is a work so easy, that it may be conveniently done in all circumstances of life. The courtier, merchant, tradesman, farmer, cook, housekeeper, every one may practise it.

#### ON WALKING WITH GOD.\*

*Aug. 9.]*—“WALK before me, and be perfect,” says the Spirit of God.—Gen. xvii. We are journeying through the desert of this world to towards the land of promise. The Lord is with us, to protect us from our enemies. He goes before us as a pillar of fire; and he shields us from behind as with a cloud. Is it not, therefore, our duty, that we should walk with him? and, by walking with him, strive to attain perfection?

Alas! although we are at all times with God, and in God, how few amongst us seem to be conscious of his divine presence! How often in the day may we exclaim with the patriarch Jacob: “Truly the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not!”—Gen. xxviii. How frequently does it happen, that we walk for hours together in the ways of sensuality and mirth, in the ways of the world, and of worldly occupations,

without once thinking that God is with us? How frequently does it happen, that we walk in the ways of temptation, in the company of the wicked, and in the midst of the occasions of sin, and not once fix our thoughts on him, who alone can preserve us from evil? How often does it happen that we prefer walking with any other than with our God? Oh! how little of the consolations of piety has that soul experienced, who can thus basely prefer the enjoyment of *these husks of wine*, before the delights of his Father's presence and of his *Father's house*.

At all times, and in all places, let us reflect that God is with us, and in us. Let us walk with him, by a constant attention to his presence, and by a faithful observance of his commandments. Let us walk with him, by seeking in all things his honour and glory, and by accompanying him in the ways of humility, meekness, and self-denial—ways, in which he himself has walked, and which are the only ways that lead to an eternal union with him.

Examine yourselves, and see what is the kind of company in which you take most delight. If it is the company of God, you will seek the things of God; but if your chief delight is to be with the sons of men, the things of God will be irksome to you, and the works and enjoyment of the flesh will principally be the objects of your wishes and desires. May God preserve you from this unfortunate state. May you henceforward *walk with God, and be perfect*.

#### ON ST. LAURENCE.

*Aug. 10.*—St. Laurence was a deacon in the city of Rome. To him was committed the treasure of the church, which he duly and charitably distributed amongst the poor. The greedy tyrant demanding of him where he concealed it, the Saint collected together great numbers of the poor, and said: "Here, in these have I laid up the treasures of the

church." Ah, faithful steward of Jesus Christ! how far are we from following thy example? how lavishly do we spend in vanity and excess those superfluities, with which we are in duty bound to relieve the poor?

St. Laurence, beholding the holy Pope Xystus led to martyrdom, was not able to contain himself, he broke out into this loud complaint: "Father, where are you going without your son? Whither, O holy priest, without your deacon? You were never used to offer sacrifice without me, your minister: wherein have I displeased you? Try me now, and see whether you have made choice of an unfit minister?" O undaunted courage! O unparalleled zeal! O divine love, much stronger than death! when shall we possess the zeal, the love, and the courage of this glorious Saint?

Great were the torments that St. Laurence underwent for the sake of Christ: but the most cruel was that of broiling on a gridiron, which put an happy end to his mortal life. Bloody tyrant! dost thou think of overcoming this champion of his Lord? Thy fire is nothing, when compared to the flames of divine love which burn within his breast. At the time that thou exercisest thy cruelty, thou crownest him with glory. Rejoice, Christians, at the triumphs of this Saint, who has embellished Rome with his noble blood, as St. Stephen did Jerusalem.

Examine yourselves, and, in a particular manner, imitate the faith of this martyr. It was a lively faith of the next life, that made him esteem all things here below as dross, to gain Christ. Beg of him to appear in your behalf, on this day of his martyrdom. His scorpions and gridiron cannot fail of moving God to mercy.

#### ON SADNESS.

*Aug. 11.]*—My soul, if thou art a wilful sinner, thou hast reason to be sad; but, if thou art not, why art thou troubled?



Is it because the world hates thee? It hated Jesus Christ? Is it because thou art poor? Thou art not poorer than he was. Is it because thy friends neglect thee? Christ was forsaken by his dearest friends: how often hast thou thyself even forsaken him? Art thou sad on account of thy corporal afflictions? Thou hast not, as yet, in imitation of thy blessed Lord and his holy martyrs, "resisted unto blood."—Heb. xii. Is it because thou canst not find comfort in the world? Seek it, therefore, in the heart of Jesus.

O how happy is the Christian, who has no other object of his desires but God! How contented must he be, when he fears none but God! How rich, when he abides in God, and God in him! Truly, he must enjoy an unalloyed and a lasting peace.

Did we seriously consider, that all our temporal afflictions were not only inflicted by, but were likewise the effects of the goodness of a merciful Providence, we should not be so easily disturbed by them. Alas! they are sent us, in order to wean our affections from a corrupt world, and to unite them to Christ. They are sent, in order to make us sensible of our own misery, and to give us a lasting horror of sin, which has been the cause of them. They are sent as trials, to prepare us for a crown of glory. We cannot have a better founded hope of eternal happiness, than in receiving a variety of crosses, and bearing them with patience. Did not Christ suffer? Have not all his saints suffered? Is not suffering the way to heaven? Why then are we sorrowful?

Examine yourselves, and, by a virtuous life, endeavour to drive away all sadness. It "is an evil which has ruined a great many."—Eccl. xxx. In your attentive prayers, beg of God the virtues of patience and resignation. Humbly beseech him to be your comfort.

## ON SADNESS.—CONTINUED.

*Aug. 12.]*—THERE are two kinds of sadness: the one arises from God, the other from the world. To bewail our own and our neighbour's sins; to behold with weeping eyes our distance from God; to sigh and languish after our heavenly country, are the effects of a *pious sadness*. It is *worldly sadness* that we must endeavour to avoid: "drive sadness far from me."—Eccl. xxx. This sadness is an artifice, which the devil generally employs to overthrow the best Christians: and alas! how many have perished by it? It casts the soul into a state of dark confusion: it makes her jealous, slothful, fearful, impatient: it weakens her judgment, strength, and resolution: it gives her a disrelish for prayer, for the sacraments, and for piety itself; and, like a hard winter, nips the buds and flowers of every virtue in the heart.

My soul, be no more sorrowful: but, on the contrary, labour to subdue this unhappy passion. For this purpose, endeavour to remove the causes of it. If it proceeds from an *indisposition of body*, wait with patience the divine pleasure: if it arise from a *melancholy temper*, recreate thyself by some innocent amusement: if from *pride*, humble thyself: if from thy *unmortified passions*, strive to keep them in subjection: if from the *restless temptations* of the devil, arm thyself against them with holy prayer, and the advice of thy director; but, above all, with the blood of Jesus in the sacrament.

Christians, let us do so. We must overcome this evil by one means or another, before we can hope to advance in a holy life. Let us consider it as a stratagem, which the devil employs, to involve us with himself in a melancholy damnation.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to avoid this mischievous evil of sadness, by removing all the causes of it. Beg of God that you may serve him cheerfully in every duty: his goodness loves "a cheerful giver."—2 Cor. ix.

## ON THE OBLIGATIONS OF PARENTS AND MASTERS.

*Aug. 13.]*—PARENTS have a heavy charge upon them. They will have to give an account, in great part, of their children's souls. How many are now lamenting in the flames of hell for not attending to this charge!—Parents, examine yourselves. Do you not, either by your severity compel, or, by immoderate fondness encourage your children to take evil courses? Are you not careless in giving them due education? or in making a necessary provision for them? Do you not, by an idle life, or by vicious example, ruin their souls? Ah! be not so barbarous: it would be less cruel, were you to stab them to the heart, and lay them dead at your feet.

Deliver, O Lord, all parents from this unnatural blindness. Suffer them not thus unhappily to ruin those infant souls which they brought into the world, and suckled at the breast, to serve thee. Give them grace to comply with their pressing obligations, that so none may perish through their neglect.

Masters, likewise, have their obligations in respect to their servants. They are bound in strict justice to pay them their wages: they are to help and comfort them in their infirmities and misfortunes: they are to provide them necessary instructions for their souls: they are to see that they observe order, that they go to the sacraments, that they are regular at their prayers, and that they faithfully comply with all family duties. They are to admonish and rebuke them, when there is due cause for it. Above all, they are to set them good example. Is this done? Are there none who wickedly defraud their servants of their wages? Are there none, who barbarously grudge them time for prayer and other spiritual duties? Are there none, who throw them off when they are unfit for service? more cruel to them in this respect, than they are to their dogs and horses. Are there none who ruin them by their bad example? Alas! it is to be feared that the number of these is very great. What will they have to answer for at the judgment seat of God!

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to comply with the obligations of a parent, if it has, or shall please God to make you such. Be careful of your children in their infancy. Give them good education, when of riper years. Be discreet in procuring them good situations, and help them all you can both as to soul and body. If you have servants, let it be your constant care to discharge the obligations incumbent on a master or mistress.

ON THE DUTIES OF CHILDREN AND SERVANTS.

*Aug. 14.*]—"HONOUR thy father and thy mother."—Exod. xx. This is one of the ten commandments, which we must carefully observe, or we cannot reasonably hope to be saved. Absalom was a rebel to his father, David, and in punishment thereof he made a miserable end. How many thousands are suffering in hell on the same account! "Cursed is he who honours not his father and mother."—Dent. xxvii. It is our duty, then, to love, honour, and be obedient to our parents in every particular. It is our duty to pray for them; to ask, and to follow their good advice; always to show them a becoming respect; and diligently to copy out in our lives their good example. We are to relieve them, as far as in our power, both in their spiritual and temporal necessities. We are to comfort them in their afflictions, and take the best care of them in their helpless age. Alas! how can we neglect those, who, under God, are the chief causes of our lives and being? who furnished us with necessities in our helpless infancy, and who, with much pain and labour, have supported and educated us? Can we neglect them?

"Servants, be subject to your masters."—1 Pet. ii. Are you so? Do you show them respect in your words and actions? Do you obey them with a good will in what they lawfully command? Do you endure their unjust reproofs with a Christian patience? Do you cheerfully submit to all deserved

rebukes? Are you faithful to the trust reposed in you? Are you careful in the performance of what you have undertaken? Do you live in peace with your fellow-servants? Do you zealously promote your eternal concerns? If so, you are faithful servants, and you will find the fruit of your labours in a crown of glory.

O God, give them grace punctually to fulfil the duties of their calling, that so they may prove to them seeds of an eternal reward. Grant them patience in their labours : make them cheerfully obedient; and let them lose not the advantages that may be reaped from it.

Examine yourselves, and daily offer up your prayers, that you may truly comply with the duties of a child, or servant, if such be your state. Often call to mind the advice of St. Paul. "Children, obey your parents in all things."—Col. iii. "Servants, obey your masters with fear and trembling."—Eph. vi.

#### ON THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY.

*Aug. 15.]*—ON this day the church celebrates the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is piously believed that her body, as well as her soul has been long since in heaven. Would Christ suffer the unblemished body of his dear Mother to be buried in the earth? Would he allow that body, which he preserved in its virginity after child-bearing, to turn to corruption, and be the food of worms? Could he deny his Mother a privilege, which he granted to many at his resurrection, of rising in the body before the last day?—Rejoice, blessed Saints, at the glorious coronation of the Queen of Heaven. Rejoice, mankind, for you have a powerful advocate. She is the Mother of God, and therefore she can succour us:—she is *our* mother, and she will help us.

Most Blessed Virgin, we cannot conceive how exceeding great is your joy on this day of your triumph: we only know that it has infinitely recompensed all the afflictions that you

had to endure in your mortal life. Dear Lady, be mindful of us, your poor clients, and still banished children. Turn not your eyes of pity from us.

Christians, is a wicked world likely to seduce you? Are you ready to sink under the weight of afflictions? Are you falling into the gulph of miserable despair? Are you appalled at the sight of your multiplied sins? Desire the intercession of the Mother of God: in all occurrences of life, call her to your assistance. Thousands has she freed from the gates of hell by her powerful prayers; and is it likely that she will forget you? No: "Let him cease to extol her pity, who, calling upon her, is not heard."—*St. Bernard.*

Examine yourselves, and on this day join with all the heavenly choirs in acts of hearty thanksgiving for the exaltation of Mary. The best way of doing this, is to be resolved from this day forward to follow her example. She is extremely well pleased to see you humble by her example, chaste by her example, patient by her example, and a true disciple of her Son, animated thereto by her example.

#### ON DEVOTION TO OUR LADY.

*Aug. 16.]*—"NEVER any one," says St. Bernard, "invoked in his necessities the Virgin Mary, and did not feel the effect of her intercession." She is a mother to us, and therefore she will help us. She is the Mother of Jesus: Jesus can deny nothing to his Mother. The tender breasts that gave him suck;—the floods of tears she shed on account of his sufferings;—the grief, which pierced her heart on Mount Calvary, is so many tongues, which powerfully plead in our behalf. O Mother of Mercy, the comforter of the afflicted, the refuge of sinners, the Queen of Angels, hear our prayers.

If the prayers of the saints in heaven move God to pardon their humbled clients, what may not the prayers of the Queen and Mother of the Saints, and Mother of God obtain

for us? Through her intercession, many abandoned sinners have obtained of God the grace of repentance, and have become saints. The many festivals, instituted in her honour throughout the year, the numerous churches consecrated to her memory, the confraternities erected under her invocation, are lasting marks of her protection over us, and of the devotion of the faithful to her.

Examine yourselves, and let not a day pass without offering up your devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Say her *Litanies*, *Office*, and *Rosary*, with a careful attention. Have a particular recourse to her on her festivals. Keep her image, or picture, in your chambers, and pay a suitable respect to them. Labour, in a particular manner, to imitate her virtues. She is a pattern so universal, says St. Ambrose, that every one may find in her a lesson proper for himself. Shun all sin: for it is in vain to think of honouring the Mother, while you crucify the Son by sin.

#### ON THE WORD OF GOD.

*Aug. 17.]*—"He that is of God, heareth the word of God."—John, viii. A serious desire of improving by the word of God, is a great mark of true and solid piety. The word *eternal* became incarnate, to reconcile us to his Father; but by his *temporal* word this mercy was to be wrought. Without *faith* there is no salvation; and this, the word of God implants in our hearts. Without the help of *grace*, we cannot stir a step towards heaven; and this, the word of God causes to be infused into our souls. "Thy word, O Lord, is a light to my steps," (Ps. cxviii.) thy word gives understanding to little ones. Had not Magdalen heard the words of Christ, she might have perished in her sins. Had not the apostles, by their zealous preaching, propagated the gospel, the world would have remained buried in infidelity.

Jesus Christ has a tender concern for our good. He calls

upon us, by the exhortations of his ministers, and by the pious books which he puts into our hands: and shall we be deaf to his gracious calls? Nothing irritates him more than this wretched insensibility to our own eternal good. Hear his threats: "Because I have called upon you, and you have not heard, I will also laugh, and mock at your destruction."—Prov. ii.

Many have left the world, and shut themselves up in close monasteries, moved by the powerful word of God: while others have received no benefit from it. What can be the reason of this difference? Is not the seed the same? Yes; but the soil is different. The latter conceive no affection for it, because their hearts are become like a rock, by an affection to sin; or they are overgrown with the thorns of worldly solicitude, and therefore bring forth no fruit.

Examine yourselves, and prepare your hearts for a profitable reception of the word of God. Lose no opportunities of improving by it. How many are unhappily deprived of these benefits, who, were they favoured with them, would be saints. Let them have no cause to rise up in judgment against you.

#### ON HEARING THE WORD OF GOD.

*Aug. 18.]*—"HE that heareth you, heareth me."—Luke, xviii. Were we convinced that it is God who speaks to us by the mouth of his minister, we should undoubtedly be more attentive to him than we usually are. The words of an ambassador, delivered in the name of his prince, are as much regarded as if his sovereign spoke in person. And are not preachers the ambassadors of Jesus Christ? St. Paul says that they are.—2 Cor. v. Why then do we not pay attention to them?

It would be an unpardonable crime, for a person to entertain himself with the follies of a footman, while his prince was speaking to him. And are we less culpable, when our



thoughts are wilfully fixed on frivolous, and, perhaps, sinful objects, at the very time when our Almighty God is teaching us the way of heaven? Let us not behave in this manner. Let us remember that, as often as the preacher delivers his word, our Eternal Father cries aloud, as he did to the disciples on Mount Thabor: "Hear ye him, it is my beloved Son that speaks."—Luke, ix.

My soul, be always devoutly attentive to the word of God, both when you read it, and when you hear it. Suffer not this precious balm of grace to fall unprofitably to the ground. Imitate the Blessed Virgin, who carefully laid up in her heart all that she heard from or concerning her Son. Remember, that our dear Lord listens to the prayers we make to him, in proportion to the affection we bear to his word in good books or sermons. Take care, and purge your heart of all sinful, worldly, and misplaced affections; otherwise the seed will be choked, or it will wither, or the devil will come and take it from you.

Examine yourselves, and see what benefit you have received from the word of God. Hear it as often as you can, and always with a serious attention. Hear it with a firm belief that it is God, who speaks to you. Hear it with an earnest desire of imprinting it deep in your hearts, and of making it the rule of your daily actions. Read it, also, as often as you can: and whenever you take a spiritual book into your hands, say to your hearts: "Well, this I ought to consider as a letter brought to me from heaven by my good angel, for the purpose of conducting me thither."

#### ON KEEPING THE SUNDAY.

*Aug. 19.*—THE institution of a Sabbath day is as ancient as the world. It was particularly established in the Old Law: and it was solemnly confirmed in the New. As we hope for salvation, we are bound to keep it, and to keep it holy:

“Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day.”—Exod. xx. Is this observed, by spending the greater part of it in idle entertainments, in unprofitable visits, in committing fresh sins, in profane employments? No: and yet, how many fall into these criminal excesses! How many pervert this day into a day of drunkenness, debauchery, and gaming! How many make it a festival, not of God, but of the devil! Deliver us, O Lord, from these too common abuses.

The end of our creation is to serve God: our greatest business is the salvation of our souls; and can it be too much, to set apart one day in seven, to serve this our merciful God, and to save our souls? For shame, let not the transitory things of this world thus take place of heaven.

It is not enough, merely to abstain from servile work, to hear mass, or assist at the public service of the church on a Sunday; but we must pour forth our souls in devout prayer, in acts of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving; in acts of love, sorrow, and humility, and in these exercises to spend a considerable part of the day; because the great object of the command is to keep the day holy. We must read good books, frequent the sacraments, and endeavour to obtain sufficient supplies of grace to support us during the following week, when the business of the world will expose us to the danger of forgetting ourselves. By observing the day in this religious manner, we shall not only celebrate a festival on earth, but we shall celebrate a festival with the saints in heaven.

Examine yourselves, and let a due observance of the Sundays and Holidays be your particular care: it will greatly contribute to your eternal good. Do not impiously provoke God by sin, on these days consecrated in a special manner to his service. You adorn your bodies, your houses, your altars, on these days; and will you neglect to beautify your souls with Christian virtues?

## ON DEVOTION.

*Aug. 20.]*—THERE are many Christians who pretend to devotion, but without any just reason. Some think themselves devout, because they are given to fasting: although at the same time their hearts are full of malice:—others, because they huddle over a multitude of prayers; although they make no scruple of defaming, or rashly judging their neighbour:—others, again, believe themselves devout, because they are liberal in giving alms: although they cannot find in their hearts to forgive their enemies. Alas! such false devotion will never save them.

True devotion pushes the soul on vigorously and cheerfully to pursue virtue. Nothing can come amiss to the devout soul: like the bee, she turns the bitterest juice into the sweetest honey. Devotion is the queen of virtues. If love be a fire, devotion is its flame: if love be a plant, devotion is its flower: if love be a rich balm, devotion is its smell, which comforts men and rejoices angels.

Give me, O God, the grace of true devotion; for I know that with it I shall receive the greatest blessing on earth. Ah! the fires, racks, and gridirons were perfumes to thy martyrs, because they were devout. It was devotion that changed the mortifications of thy confessor into beds of roses. It removes discontent from the afflicted: it fills our souls with an exceeding delight. O grant me the grace of true devotion.

Examine yourselves, and labour to obtain this rich virtue, by withdrawing your affections from a false world. Plead no excuse, for devotion is suited to all states and callings. The prince may be devout: St. Edward was so. The soldier may be devout: St. Sebastian was so. The tradesman may be devout: St. Joseph was so. Servants may be devout: Jacob was so. The housekeeper may be devout: St. Ann

was so. The widow may be devout: St. Monica was so. The married may be devout: "Zachary and Elizabeth were both just."—Luke. i.

#### ON FERVOUR IN DEVOTION.

*Aug. 21.]*—It is not enough to serve God after any manner, it must be done with fervour. Gratitude and our own interests oblige us to this. What has not God done for us? He has created us to his own likeness: he has redeemed us by the blood of his only Son: he loves us exceedingly. And shall not we make a grateful return to the best of our power? Nothing is difficult to the soul that fervently serves its God: "His yoke is sweet, and his burden is light" to such a heart.—Matt. xi. Who can be remiss in his Christian duties when he considers that the happiness of heaven will be proportioned to the fervour of his devotion on earth?

If our services are to be measured by the dignity of the master whom we serve, how zealous ought ours to be, which are performed for a God infinitely great! The courtier eagerly solicits his prince: he studies his inclinations, in order to prevent his commands: he readily and carefully executes his orders: he sacrifices his repose, his pleasures, and his *all* for his prince's sake. And shall not we as fervently serve our God? O God, it is thou alone who truly deservest our most fervent homages.

Christians, let us be fervent in our devotions to God. Let us pray with fervour: let us fast with fervour: let every action of our lives be performed with fervour. Let us frequent the sacraments, and fervently prepare ourselves for them. Let us attentively give ear to the word of God. Let us strive against our failings: let us improve in virtue; and let God alone be the object of our thoughts, and the centre of our hearts. Our passions are like impetuous torrents, and it is by these means alone, that we are to break the force of their impetuosity.

Examine yourselves, and be very fervent in these duties. Remember that they, who came last into the vineyard, were equally rewarded with the first comers, because they were equally fervent. Fervour is the soul of devotion. Follow then the advice of St. Paul : "Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."—Rom. xii.

#### ON COLDNESS IN DEVOTION.

*Aug. 22.*—It is a sin to be remiss in our devotions to God, because we came into the world for no other purpose than to love and serve him. The same motives which induce us to perform our duties on any particular day, ought to have the same weight every day of our lives. God was our Lord yesterday, he is so to-day, and will be so for ever. Ah! did the love of God inflame our hearts, how much more vigorous and fervent should we be in his holy service, than what we generally are! Did the Holy Ghost reside within us, it would be impossible that our souls should continue in a torpid state: that divine fire would warm our hearts.

The older we are, the more ought we, in gratitude, to improve in virtue, because the blessings of God have been multiplied as we advanced in years. Out of how many dangers has his goodness delivered us! From what dreadful precipices does he still continue to preserve us! How many graces does he daily impart to us! Alas! we have no other means of making a return for these blessings, but by our most religious homages.

Death is at our gates. How shall we repent, when the awful moment comes, that we spent not our time more carefully in preparing for it! Judgment draws near. What a terror will it be to us, when we shall hear at the bar of divine justice that dreadful sentence pronounced against us: "Cast the unprofitable servant into the exterior darkness."—Matt. xxv. We are entering on an eternity. Let us now, whilst

we have time, prepare for a happy one. What would not the damned in hell give to be in our circumstances! Would they be cold in their devotions to God? Would they think any labours too great to be endured in his service: No, certainly.

Examine yourselves, and fix the like sentiments in your hearts. Shake off all coldness in your devotions to Almighty God, and remember, that you cannot provoke him more than by falling off from your former fervour. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice."—Matt. v. Daily renew your good resolutions. Say, with David: "Lord, I have said now I have begun."—Ps. lxxvi.

#### ON SPIRITUAL DRYNESS.

*Aug. 23.]*—FAIR weather does not always continue: therefore, we must not wonder, if sometimes our souls be neither cherished with the warmth, nor moistened with the dews of divine comfort. Our heavenly Father feeds us with the milk of his consolations while our stomachs are weak: he puts honey into our mouths, when we first enter into his service, in order to wean us from a bitter world. But after we are grown strong, and more advanced, he then feeds us with a coarser food: he leaves our hearts dry and barren, as if he had forsaken them.

O Lord, I perceive that the enemy of my soul would fain persuade me, on these occasions, that thou hast cast me off; but I will not heed him. I do believe that thou hast permitted this dryness to befall me for my greater good; that my past sins and neglects may here receive their due punishment; that I may be truly humbled at the sight of my weakness; that, dust and ashes as I am, I may never presume; and that I may more vigorously pursue the course of virtue.

My soul, be not dejected at thy spiritual dryness, for the greatest saints have experienced it before thee, and for their greater good. David was forced to struggle with his heart all

the night long: "I was wearied," says he, "with this exercise, and I obliged my spirit to think on God."—Ps. lxxvi. Listen to St. Bernard: "My heart is dry and like to earth without water. My eyes will not afford one single tear. Our Lord visits all the mountains round about me, and it is only me that he comes not near." If, then, the greatest saints have experienced this barrenness, shalt thou, my soul, be dismayed at it?

Examine yourselves, and lose not courage under these trials. Intermit not your usual exercises of piety, but vigorously force nature to comply with duty. "Devotions performed in this time of dryness, are like dry roses, which, though they look not so beautiful as fresh ones, have yet more sweetness in the sight of God."—*Introduc. to Dev. Life P. iv. c. 14.* However, as spiritual dryness is a disorder which very much dulls the soul, strive vigorously against it; and in your most resigned prayers, beg of God that he would water your souls with his divine grace.

#### ON ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

*Aug. 24.* ]—ALTHOUGH all the apostles are to be admired for their zeal, courage, and constancy, in propagating and maintaining the cause of Christ, yet a particular veneration is due to St. Bartholomew, on the following account; namely, that he had a people the most rude and barbarous to deal with, and that he had, of course, greater difficulties to encounter. However, such was his zeal, that he converted great part of the Indies, and of the Greater Armenia, to the faith of Christ. Do we imitate this his zeal, when we have so little or no concern at all for the good of our neighbour, or of ourselves? Do we imitate him by our slothfulness in virtue, and careless lives?

Extraordinary was the courage of this apostle. What hardships did he not endure in those Indian deserts? What did

he refuse to do, when a soul was at stake? Poor, mean, and contemptible as he appeared to be, he overturned the idols of the Gentiles, he restrained their sinful liberties, and established the faith of a crucified God with all its penitential accompaniments. Have we the courage of this saint? Are we prepared to bear any affliction for the sake of Christ? I fear we cannot say it, although we have the encouraging examples of so many martyrs.

The terror of the most cruel and barbarous of deaths was not capable of shaking the constancy of this apostle. He chose rather to be flayed alive than to give up the cause which he had bravely undertaken. O holy St. Bartholomew! who, with an unshaken constancy, didst willingly submit to the flaying knife, pray for us. Why should we wonder that thy shrine is frequented by such multitudes, when we see that thou hast so victoriously triumphed over all the powers of hell, by a death the most cruel, but, at the same time, by a martyrdom the most glorious?

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to imitate the virtues of which this apostle has set you such an illustrious example. By imitating him, in this manner, on earth, you will come to reign with him hereafter in a happy eternity.

#### ON GRACE.

*Aug. 25.]*—WITHOUT the grace of God we are worse than nothing: at the best, we are but dust and corruption. We are ignorant, blind, ungrateful, miserable sinners; we are lost for ever. What causes a difference between me and the blackest criminal upon earth? The grace of God. What distinguishes my soul from the foulest soul in hell? The grace of God. If I stood firm, when he unhappily fell; if I escaped that dismal abyss into which he has fallen, is it not to be imputed to the grace of God? Yes: "It is by the grace of God that I am what I am."—1 Cor. xv.



Without the grace of God we can do nothing. Can we pray, fast, or meditate? no, not as we ought. We are not masters of our passions: we cannot have so much as a good thought, nor move a step towards heaven. What is more easy than to call upon the holy name of Jesus; and yet, this we cannot do in a proper manner, without the grace of God. How true is the saying of our dearest Saviour: "Without me you can do nothing."—John, xv.

But by the assistance of the grace of God, we may be good Christians, and glorious saints. "I can do all things," says St. Paul, "in him who strengtheneth me."—Phil. iv. It is thus that we are to become humble, chaste, patient, and wholly resigned to the appointments of heaven. How many saints, through the grace of God, have left the world, and condemned themselves to a life of penance? How many martyrs have been thus encouraged to lay down their lives for the sake of their divine Master?

Examine yourselves, and see if you have done your best for obtaining the all-necessary grace of God. In the spirit of humility petition for it. To the humble only does "he give his grace."—1 Pet. v.

#### ON CORRESPONDING WITH GRACE.

*Aug. 26.*]—God calls upon us by his grace, and shall we be so senseless as to give no ear to him? God dwells by his grace within our breast, and shall we insolently expel him from this habitation? What, if he should be silent, and speak no more to us, after we had refused to listen to his call? Could any threats be compared to this silence? What, if he should withdraw himself upon our not receiving him, and leave us to ourselves? Could there be a greater extremity of misery? "Speak, O Lord, for thy servant heareth thee."—1 Kings, iii. Cease not to visit my helpless soul; cease not to be my guide: lead where thou wilt; I am resolved to follow thee.

Christians, let us not undervalue the divine grace. It is worth the blood of a God. To resist it, is to be rebellious to the light: it is a crying sin against the Holy Ghost: it is, in the language of St. Paul, trampling under foot the blood of Christ more criminally than did the Jews on Mount Calvary, because we have no ignorance to plead in our favour.

Grant, O God, that I may faithfully correspond with the motions of thy grace. Grant that I may never be such an enemy to myself as ungratefully to slight it. I know that it is the only balsam capable of healing my wounded soul; and that it alone can draw me out of the mire of sin, and give me a title to the bliss of heaven. O let me not receive thy grace in vain.

Examine yourselves, and see that in all occurrences of life you truly correspond with the divine grace. Follow its motions, wherever it leads you. Make the best use of what you have received, that so you may merit a continual increase.

#### ON THE ABUSE OF GRACE.

*Aug. 27.]*—NOTHING is more valuable than grace, and nothing is more abused: all the treasures of the world are mere shadows when compared with it. We abuse this grace, when we stifle all remorse; when we give no ear to the secret reproaches of conscience; when we do not learn to be wise by the sad experience of others. We abuse this grace, when we shut our hearts to the inspirations of heaven; when we neglect our prayers, spiritual reading, or the sacraments; when we give little attention to the word of God, or the good advice of friends. Alas! how many sins and criminal neglects are the unhappy issue of this abuse!

Did we duly consider that, without the grace of God, every action of our lives is altogether fruitless, we should not thus abuse it. Did we reflect on the price that it cost the Son of God; that it redeemed the world, and that it fills heaven with

saints, we should not thus abuse it. Did we reflect how many souls are miserably lost by neglecting this grace, it were impossible that we should imitate them. Bethsaida and Corozain shall be more terribly punished than Tyre and Sidon, because they received greater graces, and did not correspond with them.

Christians, let us not make void the grace of God. How many thousands would long since have done penance in sackcloth and ashes, had they received the graces that have been given to us! Who knows but that, in punishment of past abuses, we may be deprived of grace, when we stand in the greatest need of it? Let us dread our approaching trial at the bar of divine justice. The very heathens shall condemn us and upbraid us with the abuse of grace.

Examine yourselves, and make speedy amends for whatever abuses you stand guilty of. Give ear to St. Paul: "Brethren, I exhort you not to receive the grace of God in vain."—2 Cor. vi. Had not this saint duly corresponded with the inspirations of grace, he had never been an apostle. Had not St. Augustin followed its suggestions, he had lost his crown.

#### ON THE UNCERTAINTY OF GRACE.

*Aug. 28.*]—No man living can absolutely say that he is in the state of grace. "Man knows not whether he be worthy of love or hatred."—Eccl. ix. How ought we to be terrified at the thoughts of this truth, when it has caused even the greatest saints to tremble. "I am thunderstruck," says St. Bernard, "when I read these words: 'Man knows not whether he be worthy of love or hatred.'"

St. Paul was favoured with extraordinary graces: he was wrapt in spirit to the third heaven; and heard secrets which will never be in the power of man to utter. And after all, what does he say of himself? "I am not conscious to myself

of anything, yet am I not hereby justified," (1 Cor. iv.) for I have a great God to judge my works,—a God, who will reveal the hidden secrets of hearts. If this apostle had so lively an apprehension of the uncertainty of his being in the state of grace, can we imagine ourselves secure, who have so much reason to suspect that all is not right with us?

Supposing that we avoid greater sins, may not this oftentimes be attributed to the effect of natural dispositions? Supposing that we follow not the sinful practices of the world, but, on the contrary, condemn them from our hearts; may not this oftentimes be the result of constitution? Supposing that we are exactly just in our dealings; may not this oftentimes be imputed to a natural bent for honesty? And where is grace all this while? Do not our frequent relapses into sin, does not the little amendment of our lives show that grace is wanting? Did we take an impartial view of our best and daily actions, how great a defect of purity of intention should we discover? How seldom should we find that they were performed purely for the honour of God? Can we, therefore, tell "whether we are worthy of love or hatred?"

Examine yourselves, and be humbled at the thought of your uncertain state. Let a saving fear ever keep you on your guard. It is "by fear and trembling that you are to work out your salvation."—Phil. ii. Beg pardon for your past offences: "a contrite and humble heart God will never despise."—Ps. 1.

#### ON THE MEASURE OF GRACE.\*

*Aug. 29.]*—WE have already received many graces. Every day, and every hour of our lives has been signalized by marks of the special favour and protection of God. Will this continue on to the end of our lives? If we correspond with these favours, we may be assured that they will not only continue, but that they will daily increase. Grace will be given

without measure to those, who are always careful to profit by it.

But, if we squander away these invaluable gifts, we can expect nothing else than that they will be given to us more sparingly. Every day we shall experience a decrease of them. And, if we still go on neglecting and abusing them, what can be expected, but that they will, in time, be wholly withdrawn from us? For, although God deals out his graces without measure, to those who faithfully correspond with them, yet there is a measure, which he has allotted to those, whom he foresees will be ungrateful and perfidious; and when that measure is filled up, and squandered away, he generally rejects the unhappy sinner, and delivers him up to a reprobate sense. Then it is that the words of the wise man are fulfilled: "They shall call upon me, and I will not hear: they shall rise in the morning, and shall not find me; because they have hated instruction, and have not received the fear of the Lord, nor consented to my counsel, but despised all my reproofs. Therefore, they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and shall be filled with their own devices."—Prov. i.

Examine whether or not you have put to profit the graces which you have hitherto received. If you feel interiorly less relish for prayer than what you formerly did; or, if you perceive that you have fallen away from your primitive fervour, you may be assured that you have neglected some of the graces, which God, in his mercy, has bestowed upon you. Be alarmed, lest one neglect lead on to another, and lest repeated neglects should, at length, induce the Almighty to give you up to a reprobate sense. Alas! should this unhappily be your lot, then, "the Lord will laugh at your destruction, when that, which you feared, is come upon you."—Prov. i.

## ON THE EFFICACY OF GRACE.\*

*Aug. 30.]*—WE seldom witness, in any of our acquaintance, a complete victory over the failings which are called the predominant passions. Where is the man, who, being naturally passionate and self-willed, is become habitually meek and submissive? or the man of an avaricious disposition, who is become compassionate and charitable? or the man, whose passions have been warmed by the repeated gratification of the sins of the flesh, who is become habitually chaste and pure? or the man, who from being addicted to intemperance, is become habitually moderate? Such a man is seldom to be found: and to what is it to be attributed? The command of God is, that we subdue our passions, not those only to which we feel no particular attachment, but those *especially* which seem to be ingrafted, as it were, in our very nature. Why, then, do we not more frequently witness the fulfilment of this command? Is it because human nature cannot be reduced into the subjection of the gospel?

By human means it cannot. But the grace of God is all-powerful. The most furious wolf may be changed, by the grace of God, into the meekest lamb. What was St. Paul before his conversion? And into what a pattern of Christian virtue was he changed, when he exclaimed: “By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace in me hath not been void.”—1 Cor. xv.

O Divine Grace! thou alone art my strength and consolation. With thy aid, I possess the means of subduing all my passions. Without thee, indeed, I can do nothing: but with thee, I can do all things. I will apply earnestly, then, to the throne of mercy for thy powerful help. I will profit by thy aid; and I will not desist, until I have subdued every disorderly affection, and purged out every remnant of the old leaven, which corrupt nature has placed in my soul.

Examine whether the grace of God has hitherto produced

its effects in your souls. If you perceive that your former passions still continue to prevail occasionally over you, be assured that they are not sufficiently subdued. Labour more assiduously for the future, and you will find that the grace of God will not be void in you.

ON CHOOSING A STATE OF LIFE.

*Aug. 31.]*—THE world is the house of God, and they, who live in it, make up his family. His eternal wisdom has divided his offices, some to one, and some to another; and to every one he has given strength and talents, in proportion to the duties which he has allotted to them. How great reason have we to abandon ourselves to the wise guidance of so good a master! We must needs be safe; we can never perish under his direction. Let us, therefore, in our choice of life, follow the unerring call of heaven.

All states are not good for every person indiscriminately. How ought we, then, to fear, lest we choose, or have chosen, that which is not good for us? An ill choice must necessarily entail upon the individual innumerable miseries in this life, and frequently endless misery in the next: and yet, how many blindly and rashly make it? How many embrace a state of life for carnal or worldly motives, without ever consulting the will of God? Can these expect a blessing from him? No wonder that their hearts are a constant prey to discontents and vexations. No wonder that their souls are covered with iniquity, and that nothing but unhappiness is entailed upon them. Christians, is not this our case.

“Unless thou, O Lord, dost build the house, they labour in vain who pretend to build it.”—Ps. cxxvi. I know that I shall be miserable, if I have not the grace of a call from thee. Grant it, therefore, I beseech thee; and let my life correspond with it in every respect. But, because O God, I am already engaged in a state of life, pardon my neglects in the choosing

of it. Pardon the vain motives of unthinking youth, and "teach me now to do thy will."—Ps. cxlii.

Examine yourselves, and seriously deliberate on a state of life, if you have not yet chosen one. Remember that it is the most critical task of your lives, since all things depend on it. Prepare yourselves for it by a virtuous youth; for it is thus that you will merit the light of heaven. If you are already engaged, daily beg of God his enabling grace, to the end that you may well discharge the necessary duty of your respective callings.

#### ON THE RULES FOR CHOOSING A STATE OF LIFE.

*Sept. 1.]*—It is to be feared that there are multitudes of Christians in the world who rashly embrace a state of life out of mere fancy or some sudden passion, without ever examining whether they are qualified for it or whether it be the call of heaven. I fear there are many, too, who propose to themselves pleasures, riches, preferment, reputation, and such like worldly ends, without ever consulting the will of God or their eternal concerns. Unhappy souls! they have "left the right path," (Prov. ii.) and no wonder that they walk in the ways of darkness. What can they expect better than Egyptian slavery with the fugitive Israelites? Let us avoid their misery.

In order to choose well a state of life, we must do three things: we must consult God, ourselves, and our director. God is our Lord, and we live for him; and therefore we ought to do nothing without his direction. This grace we must earnestly beg in our most fervent prayers, crying aloud, with the good king David: "O Lord, enlighten the darkness of my soul," (Ps. xvii.); or with the convert, St. Paul: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"—Acts, ix. Secondly, we must consult our own hearts by searching narrowly into their dispositions, by examining our inclinations, and by ascertaining whether we are duly qualified for such or such a state. Lastly,



we ought to ask the advice of our director. It is he whom God has ordained to watch over our souls: it is he who can best help us in this important affair. Saul was to learn of Ananias the will of heaven.

O Father of lights, do thou chiefly direct us in this difficult task. "Make the way known to me wherein I shall walk."—Ps. cxlii. I see that all depends on a right choice. With it I am happy; and without it miserable. "Speak, O Lord, for thy servant hears thee."—1 Kings, iii.

Examine yourselves, and, as you wish to embrace a happy state of life, practise the rules you have here before you. Take care that you engage not in a sinful state, nor in such as is likely to be pernicious to your dear souls. Never choose a state for which you are not qualified. "Trust not too much to your own judgment."—Prov. iii. With an humble perseverance crave of God his enlightening grace, without which you will certainly not succeed.

#### ON AN ECCLESIASTICAL STATE.

*Sept. 2.]*—THERE is no state in the world so honourable as is that of the priesthood. Priests are the established mediators on earth betwixt God and man. Their functions surpass even those of angels. To their trust is committed all that is valuable or dear in heaven, namely, the ministry of God's word, the administration of his sacraments, the government of his church, and the care of souls which he has redeemed with his blood.

O God, what an honour is this! that the treasures of heaven should be committed to men! that the angels should behold them with respect and veneration!

Let all, who aspire to this high dignity, be filled with terror at the thought of the obligations which they take upon themselves. Ah! how ought they to shine forth to the world by their exemplary sanctity! "God will be sanctified in those who approach him."—Levit. x. Let them remember that they

are the "servants of the faithful," (2 Cor. iv.) and that they are to labour and sweat in the vineyard of their Lord. What a confusion will it be to many ecclesiastics, when they shall hear the lamentations of poor souls uttered forth against them at the bar of divine justice, for having been blind guides, careless instructors, faithless mediators! for having led them into the precipice, by their disedifying conduct, instead of leading them to a life of glory! What will they be able to say?

O God! let me not take this charge upon myself, unless I am called by thee, as was thy servant Aaron. Let not pleasure, ease, or worldly wealth induce me to embrace it. O fit me for it, by a life of piety, zeal, and learning: otherwise I shall draw upon myself a heavy curse, and eternal misery. Let not custom, or a depraved world, influence my actions; but let them all be directed to thy glory.

Examine yourselves, and if you desire to embrace an ecclesiastical state, prepare yourselves for it by a holy life. "Wo be to him," says St. Jerome, "who comes to the supper without a nuptial garment." Prepare yourselves likewise by a life of study. The evils that follow from the ignorance of churchmen are incalculable. Alas! how many perish on account of it! Do nothing without advice. Give ear to St. Jerome: "Great is the dignity of priests; and great is the fall of those who sin."

#### ON A MARRIED LIFE.

*Sept. 3.]*—THE state of matrimony is a holy state, because God is the author of it. He sanctified it at the beginning of the world, in the persons of our first parents. Christ sanctified it by his birth, in being born of a married woman. He sanctified it by his presence, by his blessing, and by a miracle, at the marriage feast of Cana. O God! I do believe it to be a great sacrament; I believe that it affords special graces to those who worthily receive it; and that it is a figure of the union of Christ thy Son with his dear church.

Many are the obligations of married persons. Their principal duty is, to fear God, and keep his commandments so inviolably, as to be ready to forsake wife, children, and all that is dear to them, rather than offend God by sin. Next to God, they are to establish in their hearts a mutual love for each other, a lasting fidelity, and to bear with the mildest patience the failings of each other. Lastly, they are to provide for the necessities of their children. Due instruction, seasonable correction, and good example are duties which cannot on any account be dispensed with.

Do all comply with these pressing obligations? Are there none so blinded by carnal love, as to have little regard for the love of God? Are there none who wrangle with each other? who are unfaithful to each other? and who are led away by jealousies, hatred, and revenge? are there none, who neglect the education of their children, and ruin their souls by an irregular love, and criminal fondness? Are there none, who reduce them to beggary by their excessive extravagancies? Alas! it is to be feared, that the number of these is very great.

Examine yourselves, and in order to succeed well in a married life, earnestly beg of God to direct you in it. It is his gift, and you must endeavour to merit it by a life of piety. Consult your parents, friends, and director, before you engage yourselves to each other. Let not any criminal considerations, but a good intention, be your motive for embracing it. Marry not your kindred within the prohibited degrees, unless you have cogent reasons, and a proper dispensation. Marry not those who are out of the communion of the church. Engage with such only as are suitable to your condition. Take care that you marry not in the state of mortal sin, lest, by losing the benefit of that holy sacrament, you deprive yourselves of the blessings which are so indispensably necessary for that state of life.

## RULES TO BE OBSERVED BY MARRIED WOMEN.\*

*Sept. 4.]*—IN every state of life there are rules appropriate to that state, which must be observed. In the married state there are laws, which are not obligatory in the state of celibacy: and by married women there are rules to be observed, on which depends their happiness in this world, and, in some measure likewise, their happiness in the next.

St. Gregory Nazianzen, in his poem to St. Olympias, gives the following advice to married women: “In the first place, honour God. In the next place, respect your husband as the eye by which you are to see everything that is for your good. Love him alone: because he it is who is to be in this world your comfort and protection. Never give him cause to be out of temper with you. Give way to him, when he is in anger. Assist, and comfort him in his crosses and tribulations. Speak to him always with mildness and affection. Be temperate in your remonstrances with him, and always seek a fit opportunity for making them. Follow the example of those who seek to tame lions. They flatter and caress them, and never have recourse to violence or harshness. Be, in the same manner, compassionate to the weaknesses of your husband, and never rebuke him with anger; for, you are not allowed to treat with undue severity, him, whom you ought to love above the rest of mankind.”

O what peace, what happiness would there be in the married state, if wives adhered strictly to these rules. Who could have a more untoward husband than St. Monica? Yet, how patiently did she endure his provocations! how obsequious was she to his will! how attentive to all her domestic concerns! Few there are, who imitate her example. Married women are bound, by their own consent, to a state of dependance and subjection: and nevertheless, in defiance of their bond, they will

have their own way. Hence arise the troubles and the dissensions, which are witnessed in the married state.

Examine whether you comply with the duties of the state in which you are engaged. If it be the married state, consider that the duties of that state are to be strictly attended to. You would be scandalized, were you to see a religious person neglect the duties to which his state of life obliged him. Do you consider the duties of your state as equally obligatory, and fulfil them with the strictest attention.

#### RULES TO BE OBSERVED BY MARRIED MEN.\*

*Sept. 5.]*—WOMAN is subjected to man: but man has no other authority given to him than to be the protector and model for the woman. To act the tyrant over the weaker vessel, is to assume a power to which he has no right.

The state of matrimony is described by St. Paul as a figure of the union between Christ and his Church.—Eph. v. The example of Christ, therefore, is the model, which the man ought to follow in respect to the woman whom he has selected for his partner and his friend. Christ is the protector of his spouse—the church. He loves his church, and with a love incomparably great. In no manner, and for no cause, does he ill-treat his church. He punishes, from time to time, his rebellious children; but he always treats his church with compassion and love.

Oh! that married men would follow this great example that is set before them! Is it not mutual happiness that they seek after in the state of matrimony? Is it not domestic comfort? Is it not tranquillity and peace? And how are these desirable objects to be obtained, unless the man repress the turbulency of passion, and love and cherish the wife, as Christ loves his church? How is constant unanimity to prevail between them, unless they mutually endeavour to be two in *one will*, as they are two in *one flesh*?

Sometimes, perhaps, the cause of disunion may proceed wholly from the woman; but the man, even on these occasions, ought to be her model. He ought to set the example of patience and forbearance. He ought to be like the Spouse of the church, a pattern of virtue. And where is the woman, with such a pattern before her eyes, who would not be softened, by degrees, into modest subjection, and amiable submission?

Examine yourselves, and, if you discover that in the married state, you have not enjoyed the peace and harmony which subsists between Christ and his church, see where the fault is to be found. Wherever you discover it, apply a remedy without delay. Domestic happiness is of no small importance either for this world or the next.

#### ON VIRGINITY.

*Sept. 6.*]—ALTHOUGH the state of matrimony be honourable in those who embrace it, yet the state of virginity is much more excellent. “He that gives his virgin in marriage does well, but he that gives her not does better.”—1 Cor. vii. Christian virgins are the most illustrious part of the flock of Christ: they are the fairest flowers in the garden of the church; they are angels on earth: they have nothing to separate their hearts from God. They are only solicitous for heavenly things. They “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”—Rev. xiv.

Happy they, who make religious houses the inclosure of their virginity. Here, safe from the waves of a stormy world, they adore their God in spirit and in truth: here they breathe the sweet air of piety: here they are swallowed up in divine love, anticipating the joys of heaven. Oh! ye holy virgins! how do we envy your happiness? “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.”—Ps. cxviii.

My soul, since thou hast embraced a state of celibacy, take

care that pride never sully it. Let thy purity be accompanied with humility of heart. It will avail thee nothing to lead a single life, if thou art once puffed up with the sin of devils. Often seek a place of retirement from the noise of the world, where thou mayest think and speak of none but God; where thou mayest, unmolested, pour forth thy soul in fervent prayer. Join to thy virginity a life of penance, in order to perfect the sacrifice thou hast made of thyself.

Examine yourselves, and in case you have actually embraced a state of celibacy, let this be your constant practice. If you are only aspiring to that state, take care that you proceed not rashly in the business. Consult beforehand some judicious friend. Advise with your own hearts, and see what motive urges you to embrace it. Imitate the prudent builder, who offers not to lay the foundation of his work, till he finds himself able to carry it on, and finish it.

#### ON SUFFERING.

*Sept. 7.]*—WE are men, not angels. There is no going to heaven but by the way of the cross. We must fight and conquer, before we shall be crowned. We cannot think of reigning with Christ, if we do not suffer with him. No: we must suffer from above, by sicknesses and chastisements; we must suffer from the world, in our property and good name; we must suffer from the devil, by his restless artifices.

Our dearest Lord was hated by the world. His life was a continual torment, his death was most cruel; and would we live in pleasure and delights? Is it in ease and luxury alone that we can find enjoyment? Are we not impatient under afflictions? Do we not dread their approach? Ah! these are not the feelings of a Christian. O Jesus, be thou my comfort, and let the world afflict me. Let my life waste away in sorrows, and my years be spent in groans; let rottenness

enter my bones, and worms swarm under me, provided that I find rest in thee at the last day.

Christians, wonder not at your sufferings, for “God chastises every child that he loves.”—Heb. xii. He chastises us, in order to wean our hearts from a false world. By chastisements he furnishes us with opportunities of heaping up eternal treasures, of augmenting our happiness, and of meriting every moment fresh degrees of glory. Are not these the greatest mercies? Yes: “blessed are they that suffer,” (Matt. v.); but it must be with patience and humble submission to the will of Providence. Thus Christ suffered, and thus the saints also suffered.

Examine yourselves, and be not impatient under any misfortune that may befall you. Murmur not against Providence; but receive your sufferings as the effects of his mercy. What are your afflictions to the racks of martyrs? Heaven is your place of rest, and it is “through many tribulations” that you are to enter it.—Acts, xiv.

#### ON THE NATIVITY OF OUR LADY.

*Sept. 8.]*—LET the earth rejoice, for on this day it was illustrated by the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary. From her the Sun of Justice is to arise. O blessed amongst women! you are to bear a child in your sacred womb, and still to remain a virgin! What are the patriarchs, prophets, and martyrs? nay, what are the angels themselves, when compared with you? Holy Mary, succour the afflicted, help the weak, cherish the disconsolate; “Let all those experience your aid, who duly celebrate your happy birth.”—*St. Aug.*

What more *humble*, than for the Virgin Mary to consider herself a poor *handmaid*, when, at the same time, she was chosen to be the Mother of God? What more humble, than to be contented with a stable, when she saw the Lord of



Glory lying at her feet! What greater example of chastity! a married woman, and still a virgin. No love can be compared with hers. Her whole life was an ecstasy of love: and how could it be otherwise, when her God was always before her eyes! Yes, blessed Lady, you have reason to sing: "My soul hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."—Luke, i.

Christians, can we say the same? Do we imitate the humility, love, and purity of the Blessed Virgin Mary? I fear we have too much of Adam in us. Humble thyself, my soul, detest thy pride, thy impure life, and thy want of love. With sincere sentiments of gratitude, bless thy God for the rich present, which he has, this day, made to the world. *Mary* signifies a *sea-star*: beg of her then to shine upon you in all the dangerous storms of this life.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to celebrate in a worthy manner this feast of her Nativity. As she was born of God, see that you also be spiritually born to him, by avoiding sin, and by imitating her virtues.

#### ON THE ADVANTAGES OF SUFFERING.

*Sept. 9.]*—SUPPOSE that I have much to suffer. I am still resolved not to sink under the burden; for I know that no misfortune can befall me but by divine appointment. I am a Christian, and, therefore, do I purpose to conform my will to the will of God, who knows what is best for me, and who consults my happiness by a thousand different ways, when I little think of it. This shall always be my prayer: "O Lord, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."—Matt. vi.

We are apt to fancy ourselves most happy, when prosperity smiles upon us; whereas, then it is that we have reason to apprehend the severest judgments. Did not the Israelites forget themselves, and their God, too, when the world seemed to go well with them? And were they not recalled by seasonable chastisements? Was it not under these scourges that

they humbled themselves, and did timely penance for their crying sins? How many sinners, like the prodigal son, have been reclaimed by suffering? How many are now great saints in heaven, upon this account? And why are we impatient?

Did we not suffer, where would be our humility, patience, and faith? How should we satisfy for former sins? Is it not better to suffer a little here than eternally hereafter? The damned certainly think so, and regret the day in which they were not forewarned by temporal chastisements. Were they permitted to return to life, ah! how would they pray: "Here burn, here cut, spare us not, O Lord, provided thou dost spare us eternally hereafter."—*St. Augustin*. Let their misfortune be our instruction.

Examine yourselves, and see how you improve by your daily sufferings. Remember, that sufferings are the portions in this world of the elect of God. Let an humble submission, under all trials, compose your thoughts. Bless your good God for giving you opportunities of atoning for past ingratitude, and of purchasing, by "light and momentary tribulations, an eternal weight of glory."—2 Cor. iv.

#### ON ACTS OF PATIENCE.

*Sept. 10.]—O LORD, thy will be done:* I receive my suffering, as coming from the hand of a loving God: I cheerfully embrace it; and, in all humility, I kiss the happily chastising rod: I consider it as a pledge of thy greatest goodness and mercy, in afflicting me here, that thou mayest spare me eternally. Sweetest Jesus! wilt thou make me a partaker in thy sufferings? Shall I wear thy thorny crown, and bear thy cross? Shall I consummate in myself, the work that thou hast begun? Shall I die with thee? Ah! it is too great a mercy.

My soul, there is no heaven for thee, if thou dost not suffer. Thou hast been a sinner: think it not then too much to obey

the tender calls of thy God, inviting thee to satisfy the divine justice. Choose rather to be afflicted with the saints on earth, than with the devils in hell. Alas! thou art not called to resist unto blood: thy sufferings are but small. Thy heart has been criminally set on the world, and is it a hardship to be weaned from it? No: let our mortal enemies vent their malice; let them strip us naked of all that is dear, and cover us, like Job, with an universal ulcer; let them persecute us as barbarously as the Jews did Christ: we will still rejoice, that we are worthy to suffer for our master's sake. Did not the apostles do so? Did not all the saints?

But, O Lord, it is thy grace that must strengthen my weak endeavours. Grant us, therefore, patience: we humbly crave it. O Blessed Virgin, whose heart was pierced with a sword of grief, come to our assistance. O all ye saints, who have walked in the royal way of the cross, intercede for us.

Examine yourselves, and earnestly pray for the spirit of patience. In all your calamities, "look on the face of your suffering Christ."—Ps. lxxxiii. Remember that "patience is necessary for you," (Heb. x.): and that "in your patience you are to possess your souls."—Luke, xxi.

ON THE TRIALS WHICH THE JUST MAN HAS TO EXPERIENCE IN  
THIS LIFE.\*

*Sept. 11.]*—OUR Lord has said: "My yoke is sweet, and my burden light."—Matt. xi. Does he mean, by these words, that his yoke is sweet to flesh and blood? and that his burden is light to those, who seek only after carnal gratifications? Certainly not. To these, his yoke is bitter, and his burden insupportable. His words are addressed to those who desire to serve God with their whole hearts, in order to encourage them to forsake the follies and vanities of worldly enjoyments.

In the occurrences of domestic life, who could have more to endure than the pious youth, St. Stanislas Kostka? And who

could more effectually prove that the "yoke of the Lord was sweet," than he did, by his patient endurance, and by his constant cheerfulness and peace of mind? Stanislas had to endure from his elder brother, and even from his preceptor, every species of contradiction and insult. They treated him as though he had not common understanding, and turned his actions into ridicule, even in the midst of company. They called him obstinate, and pronounced him a disgrace to the high rank to which his birth entitled him. The pious youth, considering that what they called *a relish for society*, and *the knowledge of the world*, was no other than *forgetfulness of God*, and the *neglect of his holy laws*, calmly replied to all these reproofs: "I do not find myself formed for the world: I am not fitted for it: God has made me for himself alone." His brother treated him with the greatest severity, and frequently struck him violently with his cane. Stanislas endured all with the patience of a martyr. During two years, he suffered this persecution without a murmur, without a single word of complaint; or, rather, he devised every means, which conscience would allow, to give pleasure to this unnatural brother. He condescended to him in everything that was not sin: he studied, and humoured his caprices; and, although he was his elder brother only by two years, he paid him as much deference as if he had been his father.

Christians, when shall we have such trials to undergo? And if we cannot patiently endure an insulting word from a stranger, how should we endure such multiplied, such undeserved insults from a dear friend—a near relative? Let the examples of the saints be to us an instructive lesson.

Examine yourselves, and, henceforward, submit with patience to the trials which the Almighty may impose upon you. Dread only the sufferings arising from a guilty conscience. If your conscience do not reprove you, then set at nought the persecutions of men; or, rather, rejoice that you suffer persecution unjustly, for great will be your reward in heaven.

## ON VOLUNTARY SUFFERING.

*Sept. 12.]*—"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."—Luke, ix. "They that are Christ's, have crucified their flesh, with its vices, and concupiscences."—Gal. v. "If you live according to the flesh, you shall die; but if by the spirit, you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live."—Rom. viii. Are not these texts so many concurrent testimonies of the necessity of mortification?

We are Christians, and as such we ought to imitate our Saviour Christ. And was not his life a life of self-denial? Do not these renunciations, which we made in baptism, express a solemn promise, that we will live in a state of perpetual mortification, by renouncing the world with its pomps, the devil and his works, the flesh and its temptations? And have we done so? We cannot be saved independently of the merits of Christ : our eternal welfare is purchased by his gaping wounds; it is the price of his most precious blood; and, consequently, a sensual heart is not in the way to profit by what he has done for us. No: we are all children of Mount Calvary, and, as Christ died to save us, so we also must die to save ourselves.

What is mortification? It is the sacrifice of love. The Holy Ghost is the Priest; our bodies the victim; our hearts the altar; love the fire; and glory its reward. What is mortification? It is the martyrdom of love:—a continuation of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Ah! that we did truly suffer with Jesus, and die with him! "A delicate and indulged body does not become a head crowned with thorns.—*St. Bern.*

Examine yourselves, and resolve to practise this voluntary suffering, which constitutes the character of a Christian. Keep within bounds all concupiscence; check your passions;

subdue your rebellious flesh: die to yourselves, that so you may live to God. Can you say, with St. Paul: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross?"—Gal. ii.

ON REFERRING ALL OUR GOOD TO GOD.\*

*Sept. 13.]*—ARE we regular in performing the public duties of religion? Are we attentive to our private devotions? Do we seek to promote the honour and glory of God by all the means in our power? Do we love God above all things? and do we make the sanctification of our souls the great object of our lives? If we can give this testimony of ourselves, we may say that we are leading good lives. But to whom is the glory due? Not to ourselves, but to God alone. It is owing to his grace, that we are what we are. Had he withdrawn his grace from us, we should have fallen into the greatest excesses, and become monsters of iniquity.

There is an enemy, to whose attacks the pious man is particularly exposed, namely, the demon of pride. The devil will not fail to suggest to our minds thoughts of self-complacency, in proportion to the good which we perform. If we yield to them, we lose our merit, and expose ourselves to the danger of losing the grace of God. In fear and trembling, and in all humility, therefore, let us do the good which the will of God requires of us, and which his graces enables us to do. Let us not speak to others of the good we have done, even although we should, in words, refer the glory to God alone. It may be pride to do so. Let us not reckon up in our own minds the number of our good actions, nor compare our works with the works of others. For if we once entertain the idea of the Pharisee, that we are *not like the rest of men*, we shall not be in proper dispositions to cry out, with the publican: "Lord be merciful to me a sinner."—Luke, xviii. The true Christian labours without ceasing in the cause of God, and at

all times considers himself as an unprofitable servant. He does not say to himself: "The Lord has enabled me to do great things: blessed be his name." But he says: "Alas! had God imparted to others the graces which he has bestowed on me, how much more good would they have done! they would have acquired other ten talents."

Examine whether you have, at any time, gloried in your good works, or preferred yourselves before others, on account of your piety and virtues. Henceforward give all the glory to God, to whom alone it is due; and say, with St. Paul: "If I must glory, I will glory in my infirmities."—2 Cor. xviii.

#### ON THE WILL OF GOD.\*

*Sept. 14.]*—THE will of God is eternal, and irresistible. All whatsoever he wills, whether in heaven or on earth, is accomplished in its due time. No power can resist his will, nor prevent it from being fulfilled. The kings of the earth have thousands at their command. They say to others: *Do this, and they do it.* They have power entrusted to them: but their power extends no farther than the authority of commanding others to execute their will. But, the will of God is all-powerful in itself. He commands and he executes. By his own act and deed he subjects all things to himself. He had only to speak, and all things were made. He had only to command, and all things were created.—Ps. xxxii. Oh! the adorable, the incomprehensible will of God!

Let us fix our thoughts on this omnipotent will of God. Let us frequently reflect that all things are subject to it; and let us be convinced, that we have no other interest, than to be entirely submissive to it. He has, indeed, given to us the power of *free-will*, during the days of our mortality: that is, he has given to us the power of following *our own will*, in opposition to his. But, let us not abuse that power. Let us

rather employ that power in forcing our will into subjection to him. If we make the will of God the rule of our will, we shall merit an eternal crown. If we prefer our own will before his, eternal misery will be our portion ; and, after all, his *will* will be accomplished in the punishment which will be awarded to our disobedience. The rebel angels had, for a moment, the power of resisting the will of God: but no sooner had they resisted it, and taken pride in themselves, than the will of God resumed its sway, and hurled them into the pit of never-ending perdition.

Examine whether or not you have duly considered the omnipotency of the will of God; or whether you have not presumed too much on the power of *free-will*, which has been granted to you. Remember, that this power is granted to you only for a time. Make use of it in such a manner, as to acquire a title to an eternal reward. Let it be your rule *to live, to move, and to be* in God alone.

#### ON CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

*Sept.* 15.]—THE will of God is an almighty will: he does whatever he wills; and does nothing but what he wills. Not a hair falls from our heads, or a leaf from the trees, but by his divine ordinance. The will of God is infinitely *wise*. Whatever he ordains, is always for the best. “O Lord, thou hast done all things in thy wisdom.”—Ps. ciii. The will of God is infinitely *good*, and good to us. Whatever he does is for our benefit. His love for us guides his heart, and guides his hand. Can a Christian soul have greater encouragement? Let us conform ourselves to this all-powerful, wise, and good will of God. Let us rely on his power, and we shall never despair. Let us submit to his wisdom, and we shall never err. Let us be resigned to his goodness, and we shall always be happy.

Why are we so disturbed at small disappointments? Why



do we murmur, and grieve under afflictions? Will this lessen them? Why are we so impatient when anything happens contrary to our inclinations? particularly when we know that nothing comes to pass but by the permission of an unerring Providence. Is it not our daily prayer: O Lord, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven?"—Matt. iv. Let us seriously reflect on these things.

Almighty God is a most tender father. He looks upon us as the objects of his greatest care. If he chastises us with afflictions, it is to heal our wounds. If he separates us from creatures, it is to unite us to himself. If he deprives us of temporal goods, it is to give us eternal ones. Why then are we not resigned to his blessed will? O God, I desire that thy holy will may be accomplished in me.

Examine yourselves, and take care to put in practice this necessary lesson of conforming your will to the will of God. It is the greatest perfection you can arrive to in this life, and it is a certain sign of your future happiness. In all adversities, this be your prayer: O Lord, "thy will be done," visit me as thou pleasest: thy will is mine; I joyfully kiss the chastising rod.

#### ON CONFORMING OURSELVES TO THE WILL OF GOD.

*Sept. 16.*—THE perfection of a Christian consists in doing the will of God, and in submitting to it. We do the will of God, when we keep his commandments. We submit to the will of God, when we receive with resignation whatever he sends us, be it *good* or *evil*. Let us, therefore, conform ourselves to this divine will; for in this consists the essence of perfection. We cannot want encouragement, when we look on the example of Jesus Christ. His whole life was one continued act of submission to his Father's will. There is nothing that shocks nature so much as the separation of body

and soul; and yet, in his bloody agony, how does he pray? "Father, not my will, but thine be done."—Matt. xxvi.

Nothing can happen amiss to the truly resigned Christian. Is he visited with sickness, he gladly receives it, because he wills everything that God shall send him. Is he persecuted in his estate or religion? He bears it with patience, because the will of God is his will. Has cruel death robbed him of his friends, or of what is most dear to him? He cries out, with Job: "Let the name of the Lord be for ever blessed."—Job, i. Are his thoughts afflicted at the sight of the general wickedness of the world. He humbly acquiesces to the will of God. Is he distracted in his prayers? Cold in devotion? Although these are causes of affliction, he nevertheless receives them with submission. Is he molested by impetuous temptations? O Lord, *thy will be done*, is his constant prayer.

O God, give us the grace of conforming ourselves to thy holy will. We know that it will cause us to enjoy a heaven upon earth; nothing will be difficult to us, nothing painful. Are not thy angels and saints happy, in having no other will but thine? Does not this fill their souls with unspeakable joy? Is it not on this account, that they are transported with love—and with such ecstasies of love, as will never be conceived by the heart of man?

Examine yourselves, and see if the daily actions of your lives bespeak this conformity. Earnestly sue for this blessed gift, by renouncing self-will, which is incompatible with the will of God.

#### ON SELF-WILL.\*

*Sept. 17.]*—SINCE the fall of our first parents, the will of man has been prone to evil. Consequently, if we follow this *will*, we shall be led into evil. It is inordinate in its appetites, and insatiable in its cravings. It seeks itself in all things: it is always striving for its own emolument; and, in its dealings

with others, it has always an eye to its own profit. It is averse to restraint: it hateth subjection: it hateth humiliation. To be courted, and applauded, and exalted above others, are the objects of its ambition. Pride is its monitor: and ease and pleasure are the summit of its happiness.

The will of man is averse to mortification and penance. Present gratification it seeks to indulge, although, by the light of faith, it foresees that joy here will be succeeded by sorrow hereafter—sorrow that will be eternal. The will of man looks only to perishable things: its desires are earthly; its comforts are sensual; its happiness is superficial. And, as the immortal part of man—the soul, is not to be satisfied with anything that is not immortal, the desires of the *will* remain insatiable in the midst of gratifications, and peace and rest of mind continue as far removed from it as they were before.

Oh! how foolish are we to think that the *will*—the *depraved will*, which we have inherited from our first parents, will ever conduct us to happiness. By denying this *will*, by reducing our inclinations to the subjection of the gospel, shall we alone enjoy peace of mind, and prepare ourselves for happiness hereafter.

Examine how far you have suffered self-will to influence your conduct. Be not guided by its dictates for the time to come. Submit yourselves, without reserve, to the will of God. His *will* is a sure guide to follow. It will bring you into a land, flowing with milk and honey; and it will satisfy all the cravings of your immortal souls.

#### ON THE NECESSITY OF RENOUNCING SELF-WILL.\*

Sept. 18.]—WHY was *free-will* given to us? That we might have the power of submitting our will voluntarily to the will of God, and resisting the cravings of corrupt nature, that thereby we might acquire merit in his sight. The worldling

devotes the powers of his will to other purposes. His chief ambition is the possession of riches, honours, and pleasures; and his whole will is employed in labouring for them. But will a life spent in such pursuits as these, bring him to the coast of peace and rest? The rich man, in the gospel, lived in this manner, and he is buried in hell.

Oh! let us not be guided by their examples. Let us employ our will in seeking the will of God. If we seek ourselves God will retire from us. Let us, therefore, seek God in all things. Let it be our constant prayer that we may be enabled to counteract the influence of self-will, and that we may die to ourselves, and live only to God. What can be more profitable to us, even in this world, than this entire submission of our will to the will of our heavenly Master? Shall we not, thereby, become strangers to all the vain solitudes and anxious fears, which destroy the peace of worldlings? Shall we not, likewise, dispose the giver of every good gift to impart to us all that is necessary for our earthly subsistence? "Blessed is the man, who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners . . . his will is in the law of the Lord . . . and he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season. And his leaf shall not fall off: and all, whatsoever he shall do, shall prosper."—Ps. i.

Examine yourselves diligently on this subject. Self-will is a subtle enemy. It lieth lurking in the soul, and frequently is not discovered even by those, who seem to walk in the ways of virtue. Be diligent in your search; and where you discover that this vice exercises dominion over any part of your conduct, renounce it without delay, and be submissive in all things to the will of God.

ON THE MEANS OF KNOWING WHETHER WE HAVE  
RENOUNCED SELF-DENIAL.\*

*Sept. 19.]*—Do we at any time experience sorrow, or uneasiness of mind? Whence does it arise? Is it because we are persecuted by the world? Or because we do not succeed in the world? Or because we are visited with losses and disappointments?—or because we are traduced and calumniated?—or because we fear some temporal evil approaching? If so: we have not renounced self-will.

If, on the contrary, we feel a kind of indifference about riches, honours, and pleasures;—if, possessing little, we are content with that little; and if, possessing much, we are ready to submit to losses and privations;—if we are calm and contented, in the midst of the agitations and vicissitudes of this miserable world;—if we possess our souls in peace, when assailed by the malevolent tongues of defamation and scandal;—if we are tranquil and resigned, when calamities of diverse kinds press down upon us; if this be our state of mind, and it arises from the consciousness of the wisdom, mercy, and justice of an over-ruling Providence, and from the desire of reducing our will into subjection to him, we may then say, that self-will is subdued in our souls.

If, again, we feel that our only real subject of uneasiness is the fear of offending God, and that our only real subject of sorrow is the guilt which we have incurred by our past sins, then we may be assured, that the will of God is the rule, by which we wish to be guided hereafter, and that we are resolved that our will shall be henceforward submissive to his.

Examine yourselves on this subject, and if you find that your sorrow arises from worldly causes, dispel it from your breasts. But, if you perceive that it arises from the consciousness of sin, enter into sentiments of repentance; and then, you

may exclaim, with the Psalmist: "Why art thou sorrowful, O my soul, and why dost thou disturb me? Hope in God, because I will still confess to him, the salvation of my countenance, and my God."—Ps. xlii.

ON THE IMPERFECTIONS OF HUMAN NATURE.\*

*Sept. 20.*]—HUMAN nature is weak, and prone to evil. As we are not certain of the life of the body for one hour, so likewise, we are not sure of preserving the life of the soul from one moment to another. Our hearts may seem, at this hour, to be centered in God by love, and in the next, we may yield to temptation, and become children of wrath. Let us, therefore, work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Every imperfection, however, which we experience, ought not to discourage us. To be alarmed and terrified, and to give up the cause, when the grace of God seems, for a time, to be withdrawn from us, or when we are incautiously led into a venial fault, is a mark of pride. For, who are we, that we should expect to be freed from weaknesses, from which even the *just* themselves are not exempt? "The just man falls seven times."—Prov. xxiv. The experience of our natural weakness, on those occasions, is intended to remind us of our nothingness, and of our total dependance on God. Let us, therefore, put to profit these our imperfections, and humble ourselves before him, who alone is our strength. Let us, after every fault, be more watchful over ourselves, and more fervent in prayer: and fresh graces will be imparted to us.

Are we, then, to yield occasionally to our infirmities, that thereby grace may be made to abound? God forbid. To make light of the imperfections of human nature, or, not to endeavour to correct them all, would argue a want of piety, and of a sincere love of God. Were a soldier in battle to expose himself unnecessarily to the danger of receiving small

wounds, in all probability, he would receive a mortal stroke at an unguarded moment. Let us fight like good soldiers; although, by the assistance of God, we may gather strength after a *casual* fall, let us not fall on purpose, lest God should permit the devil to come upon us before we had regained our feet, and, in punishment of our presumption, leave us to the fury of this enemy of our souls.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved, henceforward, to resist manfully every imperfection of human nature. Detest and abhor the most trivial offence against God, because it is an offence against him, who is your father and your friend. Be not disheartened by the experience of your infirmity; but in the spirit of humility, "be faithful unto death, and God will give you the crown of life."—Apoc. ii.

#### ON ST. MATTHEW.

*Sept. 21.]*—St. Matthew was called to the apostleship by Christ. "Matthew followed me."—Matt. ix. He heard the voice, and, without hesitation, he followed his Lord. Neither business, riches, friends, or family, were sufficient to stop him: he easily forsook them all. What is our behaviour? Christ has often said to us, "Follow me:" and have we done it? Have we followed him, by renouncing all dangerous friendships and sinful employs? Have we followed him, by being punctual in our duties, and by a vigorous application of ourselves to virtue? This we must do to imitate St. Matthew, and to be saints in heaven.

Although St. Matthew was a publican, that is, a follower of an odious and worldly profession, yet, by one call, Christ turned his heart. Sinners, what encouragement have you here not to despair? What grounds to be assured that, if you correspond with the calls of Christ, your eternal lot will be with the saints? You see in Matthew, how the arms of divine mercy are stretched forth to receive you on your first

repentance. Make no delays then, but cry aloud: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."—Luke, xvi. St. Matthew preached the gospel in Judea, Egypt, and Ethiopia, where he converted great numbers to the faith of Christ, and at length sealed it with his blood. Ah! how unlike are we to this great apostle? We have often made good resolutions of serving God; and yet, how easily and shamefully do we break them? St. Matthew pray for us; pray that we may live up to the gospel you preached, and left to the world for our instruction.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to imitate the readiness and resolution of this apostle and evangelist, by a careful compliance with the duties of your calling. Never think of despairing, when you see a publican become a saint.

#### ON DESPISING THE SUGGESTIONS OF THE ENEMY.\*

*Sept. 22.]*—"THE devil is always on the watch, seeking whom he may devour."—1 Pet. v. He is never idle. He is always ready to infuse bad thoughts, of one kind or another, into our minds. He is not deterred from his object, even although we may be struck with horror at the baseness of his suggestions, or the filthiness of his ideas; he still continues on, with the hope that he shall either overpower us with his importunities, or at least, that he shall distract our thoughts at the time of prayer, and thereby cause us to neglect some of our pious exercises, or be less fervent in the performance of them. If he gain either of these points, he is satisfied, because he has prevented our advancement in good. After a time he will renew his attacks with redoubled violence: and then, his object will be, not so much to disquiet us, as to induce us to commit the crime itself, and cause us to fall away from that state of perfection to which we had arrived.

Listen not to his lying fooleries. Suffer not yourselves to be drawn away from your regular devotions by any of his



suggestions, however importunate, or troublesome they may be. You have God on your side; he will not be displeased with you, merely because you are tempted. Yielding to temptation will alone excite his displeasure. Despise, therefore, the attempts of the enemy; and continue faithful in the performance of your customary duties. In proportion to the violence of his attacks, with so much greater confidence, cry out: "The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? the Lord is the protector of my life: of whom shall I be afraid? If armies in camp should stand against me, my heart shall not fear. My heart had said to thee: my face hath sought thee: thy face, O Lord, will I still seek. Do not thou despise me, O God, my Saviour."—Ps. xxvi.

Examine yourselves, and if you find that you have been withdrawn from your devotions by the troublesome suggestions of the enemy, resume them without delay, and run with confidence to him, who has said: "He who believeth in me shall not be confounded for ever."—Rom. ix.

#### ON THE PRICE OF A SOUL.

*Sept. 23.*]—COULD we but ascertain the real value of a soul, it would be impossible that we should thoughtlessly expose it to the danger of being lost. The God who made it, alone knows its worth. It is the master-piece of his works, and the most perfect image of himself. It is spiritual, like him. It is intelligent and immortal, like him. All the things of this world are nothing, when compared to it. It is made to possess God, and to be happy with him. How comes it, then, that we so basely sell it, for a brutish pleasure—for a little earthly dust?

A soul is so valuable in the sight of God, that whatever his divine goodness has at any time effected, either in the order of grace or nature, is for its benefit. If he has sent his only begotten Son into the world, it was for no other end

than the salvation of a soul. If he has suffered him to spill the last drop of his blood, it was for the salvation of a soul. If he ceases not to inspire us with his heavenly graces, it is for the salvation of our souls. If he has created the world out of nothing, it is all for the good of our souls.

Christians, what are we doing? Shall we undervalue so great a treasure? Shall we prefer sin, that is worth nothing, before our souls? Shall we make them the companions of tormented devils, and cause them to blaspheme that sacred Deity, which created them for no other purpose than to glorify his holy name? Let us not thus miserably throw away our souls.

Examine yourselves, and, in your daily meditations, reflect seriously on the price of a soul. Let its eternal welfare be your principal care. If the devil tempt you to pride, malice, or ambition, tell him that you have a soul to save, and that you are resolved to save it. If the flesh allure you with its baits, tell it you have a soul created after the image of God, and that you will not defile it with those base sins. If the world strive to lead you into the ways of sin, tell it you have a soul created to serve God, and that it shall repose in him alone.

ON A SOUL THAT HAS THROWN HERSELF INTO THE ARMS  
OF HER CREATOR.

*Sept. 24.]*—I KNOW not whether I shall be lost or saved. I know not whether I am worthy of love or hatred. I cannot tell whether I go forward or backward in virtue. However, in this confusion of thought, it is my comfort, that I am in the arms of an indulgent God. Is my end drawing near?—shall my life be replenished with joys or tears?—shall it be oppressed by melancholy, or exposed to the tongues of malicious detractors? In this uncertainty of events, the trust I place in God is my only comfort.

O God, I cast myself into thy blessed embraces. Let my friends betray me, or my enemies persecute me on every side—*thy will be done*. Let them rob me of my goods, or asperse my innocence by the blackest calumnies—*thy will be done*. Let me be reduced to beggary, and exposed to the danger of perishing for want of necessaries, what can I desire besides thee, who art the bliss of heaven? O Lord, thou art my God, and my all.

Is not such a soul as this the happiest of creatures? Is she not surrounded with peace and pleasures? Is there any danger that she will be disturbed by the miseries of this wretched world? No: she is in the arms of God, and under his protection. She loves, and her love is stronger than death. Her enemies cannot prevail over her. Are we come to this perfection? Does it appear by our lives that we are in the arms of God, as a child in the arms of its parent? Can this be the case, when we so easily yield to the suggestions of our enemies? Can this be the case, when we fret and repine at almost every disappointment?

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to put in practice this Christian resignation. For this purpose, beg the grace of God in your most fervent prayers. Cry aloud, with David, and in his spirit: "O Lord, what is there in heaven, or besides thee what would I have on earth! O, the God of my heart, and my portion for ever!"

ON THE BREATHINGS OF A SOUL IN UNION WITH HER GOD.

*Sept. 25.]*—O LORD, I desire to rest in thee; thou art my portion, and my inheritance for ever. Behold, I consecrate myself, and do hereby inseparably unite my heart to thee. Govern it as thou pleasest. May it become one with thee, until it be swallowed up in the endless ocean of thy love. Banish from my thoughts all affections to creatures. What have they to do with a heart united to thee?

O *ancient truth* ! how lovely art thou, and how little beloved ! What is a father, a wife, or child, when compared with thee, dearest Lord ? and why have I loved them more ? O fire of divine love ! consume my heart with thy seraphic flames. When shall I be dissolved, that I may enjoy my God in full possession with his saints ! Speak, O Lord, to my soul, languishing with love. Were I to be despised by a false world ; it is what I desire for thy sake. Where I to become a victim to its raging fury ; I should rejoice to suffer for thy sake. These are the pious breathing of a soul united to her God.

Are our souls in these dispositions ? We cannot affirm it, when they are so warmly fixed on the things of this world, and so coldly on those of heaven. Does not the inordinate love of creatures captivate our hearts ? Do we receive afflictions with an humble resignation to the divine appointments, and rejoice under the weight of them ? Alas ! our daily actions too evidently declare that opposite sentiments animate our souls.

Examine yourselves, and see how comformable your lives have been to this blessed union. Do not delude yourselves with the idea that this virtue is unnecessary, and that it is expected to be practised only by the great saints. It is the duty of every Christian to labour to acquire it. Ah ! could we say, with St. Paul : “ I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me.”—Gal. ii.

#### ON THE VALUE OF AN IMMORTAL SOUL.\*

*Sept. 26.]*—WHAT is there in the world that is worthy to be compared with an immortal soul ? “ Were we,” says St. Chrysostom, “ to give immense sums to the poor, the merit arising from that good work would be nothing, when compared with the merit of contributing to the salvation of a soul. Such an act as this would be more available to us, than distributing in charity ten thousand talents—more available to

us than the possession of the whole world itself, for one soul is more valuable than the whole universe.”—*Serm. iii. cont. Jud.*

What a misfortune it is, that there are so few in the world, who enter into the sentiments of this eminent saint? May we not say, that the progress of iniquity, and the loss of millions of souls, is chiefly owing to this apathy in the minds of Christians? Some few there are, who, like the apostles, devote their whole powers, both of body and soul, to the glorious work of saving sinners; and to their zealous exertions, thousands are indebted for their salvation. But how small is the number! Even among the clergy, how few are there, comparatively speaking, who labour as they ought!

In what manner is it, that you contribute to this glorious work? Although you may not be called to the ministry, there are means within your reach of promoting the salvation of souls. Were you to confine your labours only to the sanctification of your own souls, the sweet odour of your virtues would spread far and near, and your example would be a powerful incentive to others to walk in your footsteps. Experience has proved, in every age, that the good example of people living in the world, is calculated to produce as beneficial effects among the people, as the most instructive exhortation.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved henceforward to labour for the salvation of souls by your good example. Do not, however, perform good works for the sole purpose that men may see you; but do all the good you can, for the purpose of pleasing God, and leave the manifestation of your example to his good will and pleasure. He will avail himself of it for the good of others when he shall think fit.

ON THE VALUE OF AN IMMORTAL SOUL.—CONTINUED.\*

*Sept. 27.]*—How immense does the value of an immortal soul appear, when we go to Bethlehem or Calvary, and there

contemplate the price which has been paid for its ransom. Even the Son of God himself has descended, as it were, from his throne—has taken upon himself our nature, and has shed every drop of his blood, in the most excruciating tortures, for its salvation. O Christians! be convinced of the exalted dignity of your nature. Place a just value on your immortal souls, and on the souls of your fellow-creatures. This world is not worthy of them. Look up to that great God who made them and redeemed them, and with what tenderness he protects them under the wings of his providence, as a hen protects her young. See with what solicitude he seeks the strayed sheep, and with what joy he carries it back to the fold. See how he communicates the happy tidings to his heavenly court, and what a subject of joy it is to them all: “There shall be joy before the angels of God, upon one sinner doing penance.”—Luke, xv.

Oh! could we fully ascertain the value of an immortal soul, what an interesting occupation would it be, to contribute to the salvation of one of them. To worldlings it may be matter of sport, to lead a soul into sin; but to a Christian, what could appear more noble—more worthy of his labours, were it even to cost the labour of his whole life, than the great work of gaining a soul to Christ? It is the work which God himself has in view in all his dispensations to men, and can man have objects in view of superior importance? O, my dear soul! how little have I hitherto valued thy salvation—how little have I valued the salvation of other souls, which are as precious in the sight of God as thou art!

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to see things in the same light in which they are seen by God. Suffer not the world to throw a shade over your eyes. You are beings of a far superior importance, to what deists, and infidels, and worldlings, will acknowledge. Consult your dignity, and exert every power to promote the sanctification of your own souls, and of the souls of others.

THE VALUE OF AN IMMORTAL SOUL OUGHT TO INDUCE US TO  
PAY EVERY ATTENTION TO THE INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN.\*

*Sept. 28.]*—CHILDREN are entrusted to parents, not solely for the purpose of being nourished, clothed, and protected, during their younger years, but more especially for the purpose of being instructed and guided in the way in which they are to walk, in order to save their souls.

The corruption of human nature is manifested in children even in their infancy. The dispositions to vice appear in them before the powers of reason are sufficiently opened to lead them to virtue. A strict duty, therefore, is imposed on parents, to pay particular attention to their offspring in this respect; and it is absolutely required that they should be their guides in the ways of piety in those tender years, when they are unable to guide themselves.

Were a mother to neglect to feed, clothe, or protect her infant, the world would exclaim against her as unworthy the name of a human being. But in what light would that parent appear in the sight of God, who neglected to protect her child against the powers of darkness, or who neglected to implant in its tender mind those seeds of piety, which were to spring up and to produce fruit, on which it was to live eternally? Could the mother, who behaved in this manner, be aware of the value of its immortal soul? Nevertheless, how frequently is it witnessed, that parents are more solicitous to prepare their children for the world, than to prepare them for heaven!—that they spare no pains or expense to fit them for the society of men, and are indifferent as to their preparation for the society of the *just made perfect* in the abodes of Sion!—that they are eager to give them every instruction and help to increase their worldly possessions, which may be taken from them at a moment's notice, and take no pains to instil into their minds a solicitude to “heap

up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust can consume, nor thieves break in and steal.”—Matt. vi. Are such parents as these worthy of the name of Christian?

Examine yourselves, and if you have children of your own, or children entrusted to your care, have a regard, above all things, for their immortal souls. Consult their welfare in this world: but be much more solicitous to consult their eternal welfare in the next.

#### ON ST. MICHAEL.

*Sept. 29.*]—St. Michael is the prince of the angels: he is the image of God, and chief messenger to the faithful. By him God spoke to Moses and the Patriarchs. He is the general of the heavenly host; and the first that made head against Lucifer. He overthrew him, and bound him fast in eternal chains. Holy St. Michael, the advocate of sinners, the comforter of the afflicted, our defender in temptations, pray for us. We know that you now fight in our cause, and that you daily protect us from the snares of Satan. We choose you for our patron, and the protector of our souls.

Christians, we make this declaration with our lips; but do our lives correspond with it? Have we not, by sin, taken part with Lucifer against God, and Michael? Do we not at present proudly fight against them? Do we not, even now, say in our hearts: “I will be like to the Most High?”—Isa. xiv. Let us take care: we must speedily desert the devil, or we shall, ere long, be involved in his damnation.

My soul, let us on this day dissolve our connexion with Satan, and enlist under the banners of God Almighty; let us fight under the command of St. Michael, and we shall be sure to conquer. If Lucifer shall endeavour to seduce us away by pride, or any other sin, let us answer him, with Michael: “Who is like to God.” O my God, who can be compared with



thee! who can fight against thee, when he considers the charms of thy love! Only thou canst fill my heart. Thou art the beauty of angels. Cursed be he that dies in rebellion against thee.

Examine yourselves, and give God thanks for having given you such a guardian. Daily beg the assistance of this archangel: but, more particularly on this day of his festival, join with all the angels in praising God, and with them prostrate yourselves in the spirit of adoration.

ON MAKING THE WAYS OF PIETY PLEASING TO CHILDREN.\*

*Sept. 30.]*—CHILDREN are not to be driven, but to be allured into the ways of piety. When constraint is the only means employed to induce them to serve God, their religion is generally found to be only external. If you wish to instil into them the true spirit of religion, or the interior spirit of piety and divine love, you must allure them by lively representations of the benefits which they will gain by it; for, even in children, self-interest possesses the greatest influence over the mind. Now piety, as the apostle expresses it, “is profitable to all things.”—1 Tim. iv. It is amiable in itself. It is congenial to the best feelings of the heart. It is a certain means of obtaining peace and tranquillity of mind. It has, moreover, been proved by experience, that its pleasures are more delightful than all the enjoyments of the world, and that all other things, when compared with it, are nothing but “vanity and affliction of spirit.”—Eccl. i.

Oh! let us instil these truths into the minds of children. Let us teach them, that piety does not consist merely in the dull recital of certain prayers; and that the service of God does not consist in the tasteless performance of certain external duties. Let us place God before their eyes, in the quality of their father and their friend: and let us constantly admonish them, that prayer is holding conversation with him, and enjoy-

ing the happiness of his society. Let us instil into their hearts a tender love for their father and friend, and a sincere desire of making themselves pleasing and agreeable to him. Let us remind them, that his eye is always upon them, and that the public and private duties of religion, and works of charity, when performed for the purpose of pleasing him, will purchase happiness, “and have a promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”—1 Tim. iv. Representations of this kind, frequently made, will be a powerful allurements to children. The grace of God will add strength to them. And why are not such means more generally adopted?

Examine yourselves, and reflect, that more is required of you, than merely to teach your children their prayers, and to correct them for their faults. The chief part of your duty is to teach them the object of prayer, and to animate them with the love of God. Be attentive to these points for the time to come.

ON THE EXAMPLES OF CHRISTIAN HEROISM GIVEN BY  
CHILDREN.\*

*Oct. 1.]*—“OUT of the mouths of infants and sucklings thou hast perfected praise,” says the royal prophet.—Ps. viii. How truly were these words verified in the prophet Daniel! Even in his tender years, he was a prodigy of piety and wisdom. Neither the pleasures of the world, nor the things of the world, had any weight with him. The law of God was his only delight; and, when the ancients of Israel basely yielded themselves up to the depravity of human nature, he, in his tender years, shone forth the pattern of every virtue.

Under the new law, models of piety in the early part of life, have been more frequent. How truly hath the Lord “perfected praise out of the mouth” of an Agnes, an Appolonia, a Leocadia, an Aloysius, a Stanislas Kostka, a Sousi, a Decalogue! How

wonderfully did his grace appear in the conflicts which even infants endured for his sake in the persecutions of Japan. An infant, of the name of Lewis, being solicited by the officer, who presided at the execution of the Christians, to renounce the name of Christ, rejected the offers of worldly emoluments with indignation. Another, of the name of Antony, not more than five years of age, laughed at the pressing solicitations of his judges: "The hope of enjoying the splendid promises you make," said he, "makes no more impression on my mind, than the fear of your tortures. The greatest happiness I can wish for, is to die on a cross for the love of him, who died on a cross for the love of me." In speaking these words, his countenance brightened up; his eyes sparkled with joy; his heart palpitated with the expectation of being speedily united to his God; his whole soul was overwhelmed with sentiments too sublime to be expressed in words. He was fastened to the cross: and his blessed spirit was soon released from its earthly frame, and wafted to the abodes of happiness.—*Berault Hist. de l'Egl. tom. 20.*

Examine yourselves, and let the examples of heroism, which have been displayed in children, be an encouragement to labour assiduously in planting the seeds of piety in the minds of children entrusted to your care. The same God, who exalted them to the height of perfection, is able to work the same wonders again, and to crown your labours with success. But forget not your own sanctification, lest these children should hereafter rise up in judgment against you.

#### ON THE GUARDIAN ANGELS.\*

Oct. 2.]—"He has given his angels a charge over thee, that they should guard thee in all thy ways."—Ps. xc. How incomprehensible is the love of God for his creatures! how earnest is his solicitude to bring them to the mansions of his

eternal peace! How effectual are the means, provided they correspond with them, which he has prepared to enable them to work out their salvation. He has not satisfied himself with the general agency of his providence, but he has tenderly "given his angels charge over them," that they should guard them in all their ways. What more could he do for them, than what he has done? Will it not be entirely their own faults, if, with all these helps, they do not save their souls!

Let us, henceforward, frequently fix our inward eyes on that spiritual companion and protector whom God has given to us. Let us converse with him, as if we saw him with the eyes of our body; let us love him as our dearest friend; let us respect him as our greatest benefactor; let us likewise fear him: for if we do not listen to his interior admonitions, he will be our severe accuser. At all times, let us be mindful of him. When we are in the midst of worldlings, let us reflect, that our guardian angel is the nearest to us, and let us listen to his words. When we are in the midst of perils, or when we are exposed to the violence of temptation, let us invoke the protecting power of our guardian angel, and rely with confidence on his assistance. When we are performing our exercises of devotion, let us animate our fervour, by considering that our good angel is ready to pray with us, and for us, and that his prayers will ascend, like incense, before the throne of mercy. In all things, let us consult the will of our good angel, for thereby we shall be consulting the will of God. Let us, at all times, do what we conceive will be most pleasing to our angel, and we shall do what will be most pleasing to God; for our good angel has no other will, than that the will of God should "be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

Examine whether you have attended hitherto to the presence of your guardian angel, as you ought to have done. For the time to come, never think that you are alone. Be convinced that your most sincere friend, and most affectionate

lover, is always with you; and never do that, in his presence, which you would be ashamed to do in my presence, or in the sight of any of your fellow-creatures.

## ON PERFECTION.

*Oct. 3.]*—As a picture ought to be like its original, or a child like its parents, so ought we to resemble our divine original, our Lord and Father. This is what Christ teaches us: “Be you perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”—*Matt. v.* And are we so, when our passions remain unsubdued, our affections misplaced, our devotions cold, and our imperfections caressed as much as ever? Alas! we shall never thus become true sons of “our Father who is in heaven.”

There is no standing still in this life. Not to advance in the way of virtue, is to go back: “not to gain, is to lose ground.”—*St. Aug.* Ah! how ought we to lament our unhappy state, when once we begin to fall away from that piety which we had acquired! The unprofitable servant, who improved not his talent, was, in punishment thereof, severely chastised: and can we expect to be treated more kindly? No: “Cast the unprofitable servant into utter darkness, where there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth.”—*Matt. xxv.*

The student labours hard to acquire learning: the mechanic takes pains to improve in his business: the merchant is solicitous to increase his stock: and shall the Christian alone neglect to aspire after perfection, to purchase heaven? O God! how much time have I lost? how negligent have I been in promoting my advancement in virtue? How have I misemployed my talents, and made void thy graces? How imperfect am I? Lord, “I have said, now I will begin.”—*Ps. lxxvi.* I will begin to regain the graces that I have lost: I will begin, without delay, my journey towards heaven: nor will I rest, till I am happily arrived at that blessed place.

Examine yourselves, and labour all you can to attain per-

fection. Say not that *perfection* is the business only of anchorets and of the greatest saints: it is the object that we all ought to have in view. Say not that it is sufficient, *if we do not offend*: this is a stratagem the devil often employs to subvert souls.

#### ON THE WAY TO PERFECTION.

Oct. 4.]—WE are all pilgrims in this world, and, therefore, we should be always marching forward to our heavenly country. Let us not consider how far we have gone, but how much remains before we arrive at our journey's end. It is a great step towards perfection, to forget the former good works of our lives, and to consider how much we want to bring us to heaven. St. Paul, and all the saints, followed this method. "Happy is he," says St. Jerome, "who considers not what he did yesterday, but what he ought to do to-day, for the purpose of improving in virtue." By this means, we shall always keep ourselves in a state of humility, and renew our fervour in grace, till we are crowned with glory. Let us, therefore, practise it.

Another step towards perfection is, not to be satisfied with any ordinary degree of virtue, but to aim at some heroic degrees thereof: to strive to embrace a most profound humility, a perfect mastery over our passions, rigid self-denials, and and an entire conformity to the will of God. Ah! this would be the regular practice of our lives, did we truly love God with our whole hearts.

A third step is, to labour to overcome all imperfections; although it be almost impossible to conquer every imperfection, we are, nevertheless, required to do our utmost to surmount them, more especially those which arise from slothfulness and neglect.

A fourth step towards perfection, is to have always before our eyes the example of Christ and his saints. Alas! how

far are we from imitating the virtues of Jesus Christ? how much do we want of the humility of the publican, of the penance of the baptist, of the zeal of St. Paul, of the repentance of Magdalen? How much do we want of the obedience of the apostles, of the patience of the martyrs, of the resignation of confessors, of the piety of virgins,—they were all perfect.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved to walk in these paths to perfection. Lead such lives, as may shine to the edification of every neighbour. Be careful not to slight small faults, but, labour to correct them. Say often to yourselves, what St. Bernard said to himself: “Bernard, Bernard, why camest thou hither?”

WHY ARE THERE SO FEW WHO ATTAIN TO PERFECTION?

*Oct. 5.]*—DID Christians, in every state of life, endeavour to advance continually in virtue, the church would be filled with saints. But, alas! how few there are that act in this manner! They know well, that, not to go on in a spiritual life is to go back; and yet, nothing is more uncommon, than to find persons who are always pressing forward. The number of those who continually increase in virtue is much smaller than the number of those who are converted from vice to virtue.

And what is the reason of this? In the first place, many who begin well, after some time grow again remiss in the exercises of mortification and prayer, and return to the amusements, pleasures, and vanities of a worldly life. In the second place, others, who are regular and constant in exterior duties, neglect to watch over and cultivate their interior: so that some secret, spiritual vice insinuates itself into their affections, and renders them an abomination in the sight of God. “A man,” says St. Bernard, “who gives himself up entirely to exterior exercises, without looking seriously into his own

heart to see what passes there, imposes upon himself, imagining that he is something, whilst he is nothing. His eyes being always fixed on his exterior actions, he flatters himself that he goes on well, and neither sees nor feels the secret worm which gnaws and consumes his heart. He keeps all the fasts, he assists at all parts of the divine office, and fails in no exercise of piety or penance: yet, God declares, "his heart is far from me."—Mat. xv. He only employs his hands in fulfilling the precepts, and his heart is hard and dry. His duties are complied with through habit, or custom: he omits not one single iota of all his exterior employments: but whilst he "strains at a gnat, he swallows a camel."—Mat. xxiii. In his heart he is a slave to self-will, and is a prey to avarice, vain glory, and ambition: "one or other, or all these vices together, reign in his soul."—*St. Bern. Serm. 2. in Cap. Jej.* These are the reasons why so few advance in virtue: these are the reasons why so few attain to perfection.

Examine yourselves, and labour henceforward to advance daily in virtue and goodness. Always strive to love God more and more. Watch every motion of your hearts with redoubled diligence; and cease not till you exclaim, with St. Paul: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."—Gal. ii.

#### ON THE INWARD MAN.

*Oct. 6.]*—It will avail us little to have the outward appearance of virtue, unless our hearts are virtuous in reality. It is not the exterior, but the interior of a Christian, that makes him a saint. God beheld the heart of Abel when he offered his sacrifice. Let us cultivate our hearts: let our chiefest concern be about the inward man.

The interior of a good Christian always walks in the presence of God. Whether he prays, works, studies or eats, he always considers that God beholds him. This is his protection



in the heat of battle: this his comfort under the sharpest trials. Do we make it ours? Ah! Christians, did we do this, we should not so easily relapse into sin: our lives would not be defiled by so many imperfections.

The interior of a Christian is *filled* with God: the divine goodness is the object of its love, the love of its soul. How happy should we be, were we filled with God! But, alas! such is our misery, that we can hardly think of him. We are full of nothing but sin and self-love; of pride, vanity, and worldly pleasures. The inward man is in perfect conformity with the will of God. He receives all afflictions with an humble resignation to the divine appointments. His daily prayer is: "O Lord, thy will be done."—Matt. vi. And is it ours? Perhaps we cannot fast, nor wear the hair-shirt. It is probable that we are not able to perform the most rigorous works of penance. But we may and ought to conform ourselves to the will of God in every particular.

Examine yourselves, and resolve to regulate your inward man. Place God always before your eyes. Let his will be your will. Offer all your actions to his greater glory. Propose to yourselves the example of Christ, who was in perfect union with God his Father: "My Father and I are one."—John x.

#### ON SILENCE.

Oct. 7.]—GOD, from all eternity, observed a strict silence, and would have held it to eternity, had not his exceeding great love for man forced him to break it. In the deepest silence of midnight the Word incarnate appeared in this world to redeem us. Thirty years of his life were wrapt up in silence. The Holy Ghost descended upon the disciples when they were in silent prayer. In silence he instils his lights into our souls. Can there be a more powerful motive for the practising this lesson, than to find it recommended by a joint concurrence of the most blessed Trinity?

The greatest saints always made it their study to keep themselves in an humble silence. They were aware that *excess* in discourse was but too common, and that nothing was more calculated to distract their attention. They knew that it was a thing almost impracticable, to speak *much* and *well*: and that it required an extraordinary grace, of which they acknowledged themselves unworthy. In this wise, and profound silence, they merited particular aids from above. Here the divine goodness manifested himself to their love-languishing souls. Here, heavenly conferences passed between their souls and God. Why do we not imitate them?

Christians, if we must speak, let it be about God's mercies, and the singular love of Jesus Christ; let it be about the the magnificent promises, which he has made, of rewarding our conquests with a crown of glory. Let our speech tend to the extirpation of vice, and to the conversion of our neighbour. O sweetest Saviour! did we truly love thee, we should have thee oftener in our hearts and mouths: nothing would be palatable that did not relish there.

Examine yourselves, and see how far you have practised this salutary lesson. It is a very great help to pefection. Let not the empty trifles of the world on every occasion interrupt your silence. Be not too forward in discourse: avoid all impertinence in it, and let a decent modesty be your guide.

#### ON SOLITUDE.

*Oct. 8.]*—THERE are two kinds of solitude, one of the body, and the other of the heart. That of the body is, when we are with God alone: that of the heart, when we chiefly think of him, and make him the sole object of our love. Both these solitudes are helps to perfection. It was in the desert that God showered down manna on the children of Israel. There he gave the law in thunder and lightning. There he fed thousands in a miraculous manner with a few loaves.

There he was transfigured before three of his disciples. There did he pray and fast for us. Surely the desert must be well pleasing to him, since he has given us in it such marks of his goodness.

Christians, let us then often retire into the desert, with Christ and his saints. I mean, not into the desert of Mary of Egypt, or St. Jerome's wilderness, but into the solitude of our chambers, there to shut out for a time the distractions of the world, and to think of heaven. Did we follow this plan, we should not be so often led away by unprofitable, vain, and sinful company. A retreat of one day in the week, or month, would not appear to us an insupportable task.

O my soul, retire from the stormy noise of the world. Enter quickly into thy domestic solitude, into the closet of thy heart. There is no company like that of Jesus. His words will enkindle in thy breast the flames of love. He will unfold before thee the unspeakable joys of heaven; and he will teach thee the way to obtain possession of them for ever. O happy solitude!

Examine yourselves, and resolve upon a retreat one day in each month, in order to settle the affairs of eternity. Your chamber, garden, or any quiet place, may be your desert. Enter daily into the solitude of your heart. Neither the court, shop, plough, nor kitchen, ought to hinder you from retiring daily into the wounds of Jesus.

#### ON THE PEACE OF A CHRISTIAN.

*Oct. 9.]*—THERE are two sorts of peace, a worldly peace, and a holy peace. The peace of the world is, like itself, false and momentary. The peace of God is true and eternal. We enjoy the peace of God, when, in all our sufferings, we ever submit to the divine will, and are directed by it in all we do. O God of peace! impart to us this blessing. Be thou the eternal peace of our souls. “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”—Matt. vi.

Nothing can come amiss to the peaceable soul. She has her heaven upon earth. Does a malicious world proclaim war against her? she flies for sanctuary to submission to the will and pleasure of her Lord. Do rash judgments put the worst construction upon what she does? she submits in peace. Do afflictions persecute, or death threaten her with its approaching terrors? she is undisturbed: she comforts herself with this thought, that what she suffers, is by the will of God, and will end in the possession of an eternal reward.

Do we enjoy this blessed peace? Alas! have we not reason to suspect the very contrary, when we see that we are afflicted at the usual disappointments of human life? when we see that we are not able to brook the least reproach, or mark of disrespect? when we see that our minds are filled with a thousand fears, jealousies, and complaints, and even upon weak surmises? Can we say that we are in peace, when we make no scruple of offending God by sin, and are running headlong to everlasting perdition? No: "there is no peace for the wicked."—Isa. lvii. Sweet Jesus, impart to us the happy treasure of a lasting peace. A peaceable conscience must necessarily be the greatest blessing on earth. Thou gavest it to thy disciples after thy resurrection; give it also to us. It was thy comfort, during the course of thy mortal life, and at thy death.

Examine yourselves, and see whether or not you possess this Christian peace. If you have it not, labour to obtain it by fervent prayer, by a detestation of sin, by the practice of humility, and by an entire conformity to the will of God. Think not of finding this peace in the world: the world cannot give it.

ON THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING TRUE PEACE.

Oct. 10.]—"THERE is no peace for the wicked."—Isa. xlvi. Every sinner is at war with God; and with a God

who can crush him in an instant into his original nothing. He knows that there exists but a thin thread of life betwixt him and hell: and he knows not, but that the vengeance of God may cut him off in the midst of his sins, and condemn him to the torments of devils. His soul is every way enslaved to sensuality: it is oppressed with confusion: it lies at the mercy of restless passions. And can he expect to enjoy true peace; especially when he is an enemy to the author of it? No: "there is no peace for the wicked." To be in peace, we must be in grace.

Peace is chiefly to be purchased by the practice of humility; for our hearts can never rest but in the knowledge of themselves, which is, the knowledge of their own nothing. Let it be our chief concern to please God, and we shall rest in peace. He is not, like the world, inconstant, but always the same, and infinitely charming. Let God alone be the object of our desires; and he will fill us with peace. Let us throw ourselves into the arms of his providence, and we shall sleep in peace. He is a most indulgent parent; and whatever he does, is for our greater good.

O God! how little do I attend to the means of obtaining true peace, when my life is composed of pride, envy, and a greedy affection to the things of this world! I cannot but desire this blessed peace, although I employ no effectual means of acquiring it: grant me then thy grace, that I may seek it rightly, and effectually enjoy it.

Examine yourselves, and earnestly beg for this Christian peace. In order to obtain it, withdraw your affections from the vanities of the world, and fix them on heaven. Say, with St. Augustin, and with his spirit: "Lord, thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts cannot rest, till they rest in thee."

#### ON A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

Oct. 11.]—"A GOOD conscience is a perpetual feast: (Prov. xv.) it is one of the greatest blessings on earth. It always

carries its God in its breast; who is an overflowing fountain of comfort to it: his continual presence gives it a paradise here on earth. We cannot, indeed, absolutely tell whether we are justified or not. Yet, if we endeavour to live well, and do not find that our consciences accuse us, we ought to make no doubt, but that we are in a most comfortable way to a happy eternity.

A good conscience is never troubled. *It rejoices in adversity.* It considers all afflictions as the effects of mercy, and as pledges of salvation. It glories in the cross of Jesus Christ. It knows that it is by the way of suffering that it must go to heaven. Are we in this disposition? Do we joyfully receive afflictions? Do we embrace them as blessings, and as means of establishing our future happiness? Or rather, do we not murmur at Providence, and fret at even the least disappointment.

O God, impart to me the happy gift of a *good conscience*. I am sensible that it is the greatest blessing on earth. It was this that changed the hair-cloth of confessors, and the racks of martyrs, into beds of roses. Without this, all the pleasures of the world are gall and misery. O my God, how sweet art thou to those who love thee!

Examine yourselves, and ever labour to preserve a good conscience. In order thereto, shun all sin. Withdraw your affections from the vanities of the world. Seek no consolation in creatures. Throw yourselves into the arms of Providence. Earnestly petition for the grace of a Christian resignation to the will of God. Ah! could you say, with St. Paul: "The testimony of our conscience is our glory."—2 Cor. i.

#### ON A VIRTUOUS LIFE.

Oct. 12.]—THERE is no happiness in this world but in a virtuous life. Virtues have this excellency—they fill our

hearts with the greatest pleasures. Let us labour to obtain them. What sweetness there is in patience, when balanced with revenge! What content in meekness, in respect of anger! What resignation in humility, in regard of pride! What transports of delight in purity, when compared to lust!

See what tortures the martyrs have endured for the love of virtue. It is astonishing to consider the multitudes of fair and tender virgins, who, upon this account, have bravely undergone a thousand kinds of martyrdom. How many more have forsaken the world to preserve their virtue! Christians! these blessed souls can best inform us how exceeding sweet is a virtuous life. Let us then imitate their zeal, modesty, and temperance: let us imitate their humility, love, and resignation.

O virtuous life! how lovely must thou be, when thou impartest to our hearts such exquisite pleasure! How delightful art thou, when thou sweetenest the gall of worldly sorrows, and makest them instrumental in gaining heaven! "Without thee, good is evil, and pleasures mixed with lasting troubles."

—*St. F. de Sales' Introduc. P. v. c. 11.*

But, can nothing afflict the virtuous soul? No: she is in the arms of God: her heart is united to, and rests in him.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved to enter upon a virtuous life; for this is the only way to happiness in this world, and to heaven in the next. In order thereto, fly all sin: be ever on your guard, and be punctual in all your duties: say, from your hearts, with the Samaritan woman: "Lord, give me of this water."—John, iv.

#### ON ST. EDWARD.\*

*Oct. 13.]*—St. Edward was king of England. In the midst of the splendours of a court, he was humble. Surrounded with all the pleasures and gaieties of the world, he led a mortified life. So far from seeking to gratify the lust of the flesh in illicit connexions, he observed a perpetual continency and

chastity, even in the married state. Having everything at his command that this world could bestow, he preferred the wisdom of God, that is, piety and divine love. He considered this world as a chaos of vanity; he withdrew his affections from it, and fixed them on those eternal good things, which were set before him. Although his will was subject to no control from man, he devoted the whole powers of his soul to promote the happiness of men. He was truly the friend and the servant of those who were subjected to him. Their happiness was his happiness. Their distresses were his affliction. How blessed is a nation when under the dominion of such a pious and enlightened ruler! Even in these times, his reign is described as a time, when peace and happiness were enjoyed by every rank in society. Oh! how amiable, how desirable is the spirit of true Christian piety! How powerful, how extensive are its effects, when it animates the breasts of kings!

Are we humble and mortified in the midst of the pleasures that are within our reach? Are we temperate and chaste, when the comparatively trifling allurements to sensuality are held before us? Do we take off our affections from the small share of worldly possessions which is allotted to us, and prefer the wisdom of God before all other things? Do we seek to dispense good to all around us as far as our means will allow? Do we behave as a father and a friend to those who are subjected to us? And do we exercise the small authority which is given to us, in promoting the reign of peace, content, and happiness, in the bosom of our respective families?

Examine yourselves, and place the example of St. Edward before your eyes. The imitation of his virtues will ensure to you every blessing, and make you a glorious "spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men."—1 Cor. iv.

#### ON FAITH.

*Oct. 14.]*—WHAT the church proposes to her children to be believed, she has expressly received from Jesus Christ. She



teaches nothing but what is grounded on the authority of God's revealed word, confirmed by miracles, signed with the penitential lives of confessors, sealed with the blood of innumerable martyrs. She teaches nothing but what the meanest understanding, by the help of faith, is capable of reaching to. O God, we adore thy boundless mercy; because, "hiding thy truths from the wise ones of the world, thou hast vouchsafed to reveal them to us little ones."—Matt. xi. We cannot doubt of the truths thou hast delivered, without questioning thy authority: there is no rejecting one point, without an unjust violation of the whole.

Our faith will never save us, unless it be enlivened by good works. "The devils believe and tremble:" (James ii.) but what are they the better for their dead faith? Ah! since we believe in a God infinitely great, let us serve him,—a God infinitely good, let us love him,—infinitely just, lest us fear him,—infinitely holy, let us not sin against him.

We believe that they who are great in the eyes of men, are not so in the sight of God: why then do we pant after worldly praises? We believe that Christ has placed true happiness in the doing good works; and why do we neglect them? We believe that humility and a Christian self-denial are the two paths that lead to heaven, and can we think that we are walking in either of them when we lead a life of self-love, pride, and vanity? No: we may as well renounce our faith, as not change our lives.

Examine yourselves, and let your faith be accompanied with good works, for a dead faith cannot save you. Thank God that he has called you to the true faith; and remember that your punishment will be more terrible, than what the heathens will receive, if you live not up to what your faith teaches you.

## ON THE GIFT OF FAITH.

Oct. 15.]—"WITHOUT faith it is impossible to please God."—Heb. xi. My faith must be *entire*, or I shall not please him. To believe some points, and to disbelieve others, is to believe through *fancy*, and not out of a *divine motive*. Let me pretend to keep nine of the commandments, and yet live and die in the violation of the tenth, I shall not be saved. Neither shall I, if I live and die in the disbelief of any one point of faith, declared such by the Catholic Church, guided by the unerring Spirit of God. To reject one article, is to reject the authority of Jesus Christ, upon which all are equally founded. O God, my faith shall be entire.

Faith is the foundation of piety, humility, hope, love, patience: all the virtues are raised upon it. Faith humbles us, in opening our eyes to see God and ourselves. Faith causes us to hope, by proposing heaven as the reward of our labours. Faith inflames our love, by fixing our thoughts on the perfections of God, and his mercies to us. Faith supports our patience, by assuring us that "a light and momentary tribulation works in us above measure an eternal weight of glory."—2 Cor. iv.

"Lord, increase my faith."—Luke, xvii. I desire no other than a lively faith. With it, I have all that is necessary, and I cannot fail of being happy. It was a lively faith that encouraged thy martyrs to spill their blood. It was the same that caused thy confessors to renounce the world, and to "count all things but as dung to gain thee."—Phil. iii. "Lord, increase my faith."

Examine yourselves, and earnestly pray for this gift of faith. It is a great grace, and it must be obtained by prayer. Had you faith strong enough, you might, if sufficient cause existed, remove mountains. Whenever the devil shall tempt you to sin, cry aloud, with the apostles, "Lord, increase my faith." With this weapon you will assuredly defeat him.

## ON ACTS OF FAITH.

*Oct. 16.]*—O GOD, I believe with a firm faith whatever thy apostolic church teaches me, and I had rather die than renounce any one article of it. I believe those things which my understanding is not capable of comprehending, namely, that thou art my God, and that thou hast prepared a heaven for the reward of my good works, and a hell for the bad. I believe what my reason cannot fathom;—that there are three persons in thy blessed Godhead, and that thy eternal Son was made man to redeem my soul. I do firmly believe what is contradictory to the testimony of my senses, that the very substance of thy body and blood is truly on our altars, under the appearances of bread and wine. My God! has not thy beloved Son told me so? And shall not I believe him? Shall I ever dare to question what thy eternal truth has said?

Lord, I am not ashamed to profess the faith of thy crucified Son, but, on the contrary, I glory in it. When I consider that it was founded by a man condemned and basely murdered—when I find it established over all the world—not by the sword, but by poor ignorant fishermen—when I see the greatest monarchs submitting their necks to this humble yoke, and fall at the feet of its poor ministers, I am forced to cry out: “It is thou, O Lord, who hast done these wonders!” When I consider again the antiquity of this faith, and that it has been constantly professed for nearly eighteen hundred years—when I behold the purity of its doctrine, and the sanctity and labours of those who live up to it—when I behold the majesty of its ceremonies, the profound learning of its teachers, and the long list of its numerous martyrs, then am I convinced that “it is the work only of thy right hand.”—Ps. cxvii.

O God, I beseech thee so to strengthen me in this faith, that the most insinuating artifices of the enemy of mankind

may never shake it. Grant that my life may be conformable to it in every particular. "Lord, increase my faith."—Luke, xvii. Did I seriously consider thy revealed truths, it is impossible that I should offend thee.

Examine yourselves, and let not a day pass without offering up to God some acts of faith. Remember that "the just man lives by faith."—Rom. i. Follow St. Paul's advice: "Let us walk by faith, and not by sight."—2 Cor. v.

#### ON MOTIVES OF FEAR.

*Oct. 17.]—WHAT have we been?* Sinners. This we know; but we cannot tell whether our sins are pardoned. We have confessed them, but we cannot tell whether we have done it worthily. Perhaps, we have concealed some mortal sin through fear, shame, or carelessness. Perhaps, our hearts have not been truly upright; at least, have we not reason to suspect that this has been the case, when we so frequently relapse and live on without amendment?

What are we *at present*? Are we in a state of grace? Are our consciences so well satisfied that, in case we were summoned this very moment to bid adieu to the world, we should crave no delay? I fear we cannot say it. Alas! how often does Satan transform himself into an angel of light! How often do we mistake vice for virtue! How unhappily does passion blind our judgment, and cause us to think those sins venial which are mortal! Many times our actions are seemingly good, but are we sure that they are acceptable to God? May there not be a great defect of *intention*? O God, it is "thou only who can sound the bottom of our hearts."—1 Kings, xvii.

What *shall we be*? Shall we be happy with the saints, or miserable with the damned? All depends on a good will, than which nothing is more inconstant. We cannot be saved without the grace of God, which we are incapable of meriting.

We are not so excellent as were the apostate angels, nor honoured with greater favours than was the apostle Judas, and yet they are lost. Ah! we have very great reason to fear our uncertain lot.

Examine yourselves, and “with fear and trembling work out your salvation.”—Phil. ii. Despair of your own strength, and confide in God. Pray, with David: “Pierce, O Lord, my flesh with thy holy fear.”—Ps. cxviii. I confess that I am a frail vessel. Help me with thy grace, or I am undone for ever.

ON ST. LUKE, THE EVANGELIST.\*

Oct. 18.]—ST. Luke was a convert to the Christian faith. No sooner were his eyes opened to behold the mysteries of the new law, than he began seriously to study its maxims, and to copy them in his life. His eminent virtues induced St. Paul to adopt him for his companion. Oh! what sublime lessons did he learn from that great apostle! How eminently did they qualify him to become an evangelist, or writer of the gospel!

Do we profit as we ought to do, by the lessons of St. Paul? St. Luke has transmitted them to us, in the book of *the Acts of the Apostles*, and do we study them as he did? We do not enjoy the benefit of the familiar conversation of St. Paul, but are not his lessons equally instructive, “whether delivered in writing, or by word of mouth?” St. Luke followed them, although he was thereby exposed to persecutions, to imprisonment, to tortures, and to death. We are not in danger of any of these consequences, and why are we so tepid—so negligent in attending to instructions, which raised St. Luke to such an eminent degree of sanctity? The reason is, because we are too much attached to the things of this world, and because we feel too little of the love of God. Oh! let us hate this wretched world and all its vanities, and let us turn our hearts

and our affections wholly to him, who alone can save us from misery here, and from eternal torments hereafter.

St. Luke excelled, likewise, in the science of *medicine*, and in the art of *painting*. These acquirements he devoted, after his conversion, to the cause of God, and to the service of religion. Cannot we do the same? The acquirements which we have gained by education, may all be made to contribute to the same pious purposes; and does it not argue a want of subjection to the will of God, and of love for his service, if we alienate these his gifts from him, and devote them to the service of vanity and folly?

Examine yourselves on this subject, and be resolved, henceforward, to follow the lessons of your inspired teachers, and to devote all your powers to the love and service of your heavenly Master. For, thus only shall you be made partakers with the saints in glory.

#### ON MOTIVES OF HOPE.

Oct. 19.]—God is our maker. As it is natural for a workman to like his own work, so does our Lord love us, the work of his hands. He is as tender of us, as of the apple of his eye: and “if a woman should forget the fruit of her womb, he cannot forget us.”—Isa. xlix. He has engraven us in his heart. Ah! what motives of hope! God is our Father, and the best of Fathers. He will easily forgive the offences, and forget the follies of his repenting child. He receives the prodigal, the thief, Magdalen, and the publican, into his open embraces. He knows our wants: he is able to succour us: he loves us exceedingly. And, after all, can he see us perish? No: let us put our trust in him, and we shall never be confounded.

My soul, behold thy God clothed in the habit of a mortal man, for thy sake. See his tears in the manger: he shed them for thee. Hear his voice: “Why will ye die, O house of Israel?”—Ezech xxxiii. See how he spills his blood for thee

on Mount Calvary. Canst thou distrust, when thou seest the blood of thy dying Jesus flowing out in streams to wash away thy sins?

Lord, what has not thy goodness done for me? Thou has bequeathed to thy church the Scriptures, sacraments, examples, instructions, and prayers for thy benefit. Thou hast ordered thy angels to watch over me day and night, to guard my soul. Thy blessed Mother is a mother to me: thy glorious saints help me by their suffrages: heaven and earth concur to make me happy. What can I desire more? or what more canst thou give? The most abandoned sinner has no reason to despair.

Examine yourselves, and under all appointments, still place your hope in the divine goodness: you cannot want motives to excite you to it. Always remember that nothing can befall you, but by the will or permission of a loving God, who can and often does turn the worst of evils to our greater good.

#### ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

*Oct. 20.]*—We must love God above all things. We must love him more than friends, company, riches, pleasures, or our very selves. St. Paul did so. "Who shall separate me," he says, "from the love of God? Shall tribulation, distress, or famine? shall danger, persecution, or the sword? Nothing shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Rom. viii. Are we in this resolute disposition? Can we say it, when even the weakest temptations of the devil, when the basest suggestions of the flesh, when the vilest pleasures of a vain world gain upon our hearts, and wholly divide them from the love of God?

Our works are dead without the love of God. Do we believe in Jesus Christ? Do we penitently relieve the poor? Have we the courage to deliver up our bodies to the flames?

St. Paul assures us, "that all this is nothing, without the love of God."—1 Cor. xiii. Do we affect a regularity in our lives? Do we pray, or undertake voluntary mortifications? We are still nothing without the love of God.

Let us therefore love him with all our hearts. "Love, and do what thou wilt," was the saying of St. Augustin. Nothing is hard to him who truly loves. The saints found it so. Although their torments were in themselves cruel, love changed them into roses. Although their hair-shirts were mortifying, love sweetened them into pleasures. Although their passions were rebellious, love made them the instruments of their future glory.

Examine yourselves, and see if the love of God commands your thoughts: see if it be the rule of your daily actions. Implore this grace in your most fervent prayers; saying often, in the language of the church: "Come, O Holy Ghost, replenish the hearts of thy faithful, and kindle in them the fire of thy love."

#### ON ACTS OF LOVE.

Oct. 21.]—O GOD, thou dost command me to love thee, and shall I not obey? If I love thee not, thou threatenest me with misery: and is there a greater misery than not to love thee? Thou hast done all that thy wisdom could invent to win our hearts: and shall we refuse thee this small favour? No happiness in this world can be compared with thy love: and shall we prefer before it the empty pleasures of this wretched world? Look down, O Lord, mercifully upon us, and soften our stony hearts with the fire of thy love. If thou must avenge our past folly, let it be by sealing on our souls thy divine love, notwithstanding our senseless and wilful opposition.

Although we have reason to suspect the truth of our words, yet we dare not say that *we do not love thee*, lest thy charming perfections, which most deservedly challenge our affections—



lest all created beings, which are so many blessings thou hast bestowed upon us, should rise up in judgment, and condemn our ingratitude. We have, therefore, "loved thee, O ancient truth, but we have loved thee too late."—*St. Augustin.*

O God, when I reflect that thou hast loved me from all eternity; when I reflect that thou didst love me, even when I was thy enemy: how am I confounded at my past neglects! Once more, O God, look down upon me, and kindle the fire of thy love in my frozen heart. May it ever burn, till it be melted in love. I know that my heart is only made for thee, and that it cannot rest till it rests in thee.

Examine yourselves, and let not a day pass without offering to your God some acts of love. Let neither self-love, nor the love of creatures, ever take place of the love of God. Lament all past neglects, saying, with St. Augustine, and with his spirit: "O divine love, which I have known too late, and from which I have wandered too long, to be deprived of thee for ever is the punishment of hell: to possess thee for ever, is the happiness of heaven."

#### ON THE MARKS OF TRUE LOVE.

*Oct. 22.]*—WE often say that we love God, and we are as often mistaken. Hardly a day passes over our heads, but we cry out, from time to time: *O Lord, I love thee*: when, at the same time, our affections to sin, our indulged passions, our cherished imperfections, and almost daily actions, give the lie to our words.

The love of God is a *love above all things*. Is ours such? Do not the things of this world stand in competition with it? Are we prepared to lose all, rather than this love? The love of God is a *disinterested* love. It seeks not itself, but what belongs to God. Ours must be such. We must love him for his own sake. We must love him because he is infinitely good in himself. The love of God is *active*. It not only burns in

the breast, but it breaks forth, and appears in all the actions of the lover. Does our love do so? Are our thoughts sweetened with love? Do our words breathe forth love? Are our actions animated with love?

The love of God is an *undaunted* love. It cares not what the world can say: no affection to creatures is capable of shaking it: it fears not the malicious suggestions of Satan: it bids defiance to the alluring temptations of the flesh: it regards not the scandalous reproaches of the envious, nor death itself. Is our love so victorious? The love of God is *patient, humble, chaste, resigned*. Alas! we cannot say that ours is such, when the least contradiction puts us into a ferment; when the smallest disappointment renders us so impatient; when we exalt ourselves on every occasion, and pamper our bodies in diet and apparel.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved to remove everything that may overcloud your love of God. When you find that it is accompanied with these marks, you may be assured that it cannot be counterfeit. Divide not your hearts between God and the world. Look up to the saints; you will see that they loved their God with their whole hearts.

#### ON THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.

*Oct. 23.]*—THERE is no loving God without loving our neighbour. “He that says he loves God, and hateth his brother, is a liar.”—1 John, iv. Our blessed Saviour never pressed any precept upon us more strongly than this of fraternal charity: “By this shall the world know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”—John, xiii.

Our neighbour is the noblest work of the creation: he bears a lively image of God himself: he is created to be happy with the angels in heaven, there to sing forth the praises of his maker. And shall we not love him? He has been redeemed by the blood of Christ: he is his child, and

our brother; and shall we not love him? Ah! let us love our neighbours as ourselves. We fight under the same banner of faith: we communicate together in the prayers, the holy sacraments, and sacrifice of the church, we partake of the most divine banquet of union—the body of Christ; let us, therefore, be united in the bonds of love.

Alas! how few in this distracted world religiously comply with this pressing duty! How many, on the other hand, actually harbour malice in their hearts, murder their neighbour's character by detraction, and commit acts of violence on his goods and person! Many of the better sort, likewise, have reason to apprehend a want of charity, when they make sport of exposing their neighbour, and when their chamber and table talk is of his failings.

Examine yourselves, and take care to be in charity with every neighbour; bear with his imperfections, considering that you yourselves are oftentimes subject to many. These little trials may be a means of your inheriting a crown of glory. Be not too censorious, for it is a sign of an uncharitable heart; let this maxim, “do as you would be done by,” (Luke, vi.) be the object of your thoughts, and the practice of your lives.

#### ON THE RULES OF CHARITY

*Oct. 24.]*—WE are often mistaken in the love of our neighbour; in case we bear him no malice, or do him no injury, we immediately conclude that we have done our duty. But alas! how far may we still be from the rules of charity! The first rule of charity is, that we “love our neighbour as ourselves.”—Matt. xxii. Now what kind love is that? The love we bear ourselves, is a tender love; it feels whenever the least evil is endured; it hesitates at nothing to promote our own well-being. Is our love of our neighbour such? Do we compassionate him in his sufferings? Do we run in to his assist-

ance, when we are able to relieve him? If we are deficient in the practice of these things, our love cannot be true.

The second rule of charity is, that “we do as we would be done by.”—Matt. vii. We seldom like to be treated with severity : we find it a difficult task not to resent an affront; and we are little pleased to be wrongfully spoken of; we can hardly brook the exposing our failings, or the malicious construction of our innocent actions. No : we desire to have our failings overlooked, our weaknesses indulged : we desire to be well spoken of, and to be beloved by all. And is this our conduct to our neighbour? If it be not, our love is false.

The third rule of charity is, that “we love our neighbour as Christ has loved us.”—John, xiii. What kind of a love is that? He has loved us without any merit on our side, or benefit to himself. He has loved us so far as to sacrifice for us his repose and life. Has our love been such? Alas! I fear we cannot pretend to it. O God, I must love thee, and my neighbour too, more than I have hitherto done, if I think to comply with these Christian rules.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to live up to these rules of charity. Fix them always before your eyes. Impress them on your hearts: that whenever you are tempted to a breach of them, you may resolutely say, “O Lord, thou hast commanded me to love my neighbour, and I am resolved to do it.”

#### ON FORGIVING INJURIES.

*Oct. 25.]*—WE must forgive our enemies. “Forgive, and it shall be forgiven you.”—Luke, vi. This is an indispensable condition. Without this forgiveness, our most zealous prayers, the very prayer which Christ himself has taught us, will prove our condemnation. Were we to deny ourselves, were we to sacrifice our reason to the obedience of faith, our lives for religion, or were we to offer up Jesus Christ to his Father in the adora-

ble sacrifice of the mass, all would be nothing without mercy, or fraternal forgiveness. "Go, reconcile thyself to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."—Matt. v.

Did we seriously reflect on what our sins have deserved, and that, by one mortal sin, we have incurred the debt of everlasting punishment : did we truly consider that, notwithstanding our tears, there may remain a heavy satisfaction still due to the divine justice; did we behold the patience of our great God in bearing with us, and that eternal crown which has been purchased by a meek submission to reproaches, it is certain that we should not so easily resent or retaliate injuries.

Christians, hear the dying prayer of your crucified Lord : "Father, forgive them." Although my ears ring with blasphemies ; although my tongue be embittered with gall, my body covered with wounds, and I myself am dying for the sins of my executioners, I beseech thee to pardon them. By these thorns which pierce my head, by the tears which trickle from my eyes, by my gaping wounds, which must move thee to pity, "forgive them, for they know not what they do."—Luke, xiii. Will not so excellent an example move us.

Examine yourselves, and always forgive all injuries from your hearts. To forgive and to forget is the duty of a Christian ; and this must be done, if you value your salvation. Although nature be averse to it, you must make nature bend. Let your prayer, therefore, be : "O Lord, forgive us our trespasses, and give us grace to forgive them that trespass against us."

#### ON ANIMOSITY \*

*Oct. 26.]*—It is easy to say : "I forgive my enemy ; I would not injure him ; I hope God will forgive him." But is it easy to approach an enemy—to speak kindly to him, to take him friendly by the hand, to give him to eat, if he be

hungry, or to drink, if he be thirsty? and this, without a word concerning his former, or even present misconduct towards us; or without a single feeling of animosity, or ill-will towards him. Human nature cannot do it. But *we are children of grace*: and with the assistance of grace, we can do all things.

It is not required of us, that we should give our confidence to those who have, and who will again, probably, betray that confidence. Nor is it required that we should admit into the number of our familiar friends, those who, by their misconduct, or by their want of prudence, although they may be nearly related to us by blood, have proved themselves unworthy of our confidence. We are to be guided by *prudence*, and not by *ill-will*; we are to be guided by the *voice of God*, and not by the *passions of human nature*: and, consequently, when we find it advisable to dissolve the union of intimacy with former friends, animosity or spleen should have no influence over us, nor should the bonds of Christian charity be weakened.

In fact, what should we gain, were we to treat our offending brother with contempt and hatred? Should we thereby make our cause appear just in the eyes of men? Not at all. Should we be making ourselves more acceptable in the sight of God? The very reverse; we should become objects of indignation before him, and be called, like the unjust steward, to a severe account for all our own transgressions. Let us not, therefore, be enemies to ourselves, by indulging the feelings of animosity.

Examine yourselves, and see whether you freely forgive as you hope to be forgiven. *To bear wrongs patiently*, is a virtue in the sight of God, and one of the spiritual works of mercy. Practise it, and you will find that it will be of essential benefit to you.

## ON SINCERE RECONCILIATIONS.\*

Oct. 27.]—ARE we truly reconciled to our offending brethren, when we look shy upon them—refuse to speak to them—or when we do speak, speak with a certain contemptuous coolness? Certainly we are not. Are we truly reconciled with our offending brethren, when, observing all the outward forms of civility, we are ready to make ill-natured remarks upon them, and are pleased when we hear others speak unfavourably of them? Certainly we are not: for by such conduct, we show that there lies lurking in the breast something which is very opposite to Christian charity.

May we not then be allowed to express, in any manner, the feelings of indignation against those who hate us, and persecute, and calumniate us? No: the gospel says: “Do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who calumniate you: for if you only love them that love you, what reward shall you have?”—Matt. v. This, indeed, is not according to the ways of the world; but the ways of the world are not to be preferred before the ways of God. As Christians, it is our duty to “render to no man evil for evil: but to overcome evil with good.”—Rom. xii. Oh! let us never follow the ways of the world. Let us behave towards our enemies, as we wish God to behave towards us. We are the enemies of God by sin; and our prayer is, that he would forgive us truly and sincerely, that he would blot out our sins entirely from his remembrance, and that he would receive us again into his embraces as affectionately as if we had never offended him. Let us act in this manner towards our enemies, and we shall truly *overcome evil with good*.

Examine yourselves, and see whether you be reconciled in this manner with all your enemies. Deceive not yourselves with false appearances: for, as the Lord dealt with the wicked

servant, "so shall our heavenly Father deal with you, unless you forgive every one his brother from your hearts."—Matt. xviii.

ON SS. SIMON AND JUDE.

*Oct. 28.]*—THERE are several reasons which call upon us to honour these two Saints, Simon and Jude. They were near a-kin to our Saviour Christ: they were made apostles: they were fathers of the faithful: they were foundation stones of God's Universal Church: they triumphed over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and by a glorious martyrdom have entered heaven.

Let us honour these great apostles, St. Simon and St. Jude. Let us live up to the doctrines they preached, by imitating their lives. They were related to Christ: so are we by baptism. We were then made the children of God: and have we remained dutiful? Do we not actually dishonour, and rebel against him by a life of sin? This is not imitating these two apostles; we shall never triumph by these means, over the world and the devil.

O how glorious is the dignity of an apostle! We might all be apostles, did we truly despise the world, and zealously promote our own eternal good, and that of our neighbour. There is nothing more heroic than to die a martyr for Jesus Christ: and this we may all do, by submitting with resignation to the divine appointments, and patiently embracing the afflictions which are sent us; in this manner we may live and die martyrs. St. Simon and St. Jude suffered great persecutions, and, at length, were cut to pieces by their malicious enemies. We must suffer, likewise, before we can enter heaven. We must fight till death, before we are crowned.

Examine yourselves, and labour in the practice of those heroic virtues, of which St. Simon and St. Jude have set such



illustrious examples. Beseech them to appear in your cause, and to present your petitions to the Lord of glory. Conform to the doctrine which St. Jude has left you in his *Canonical Epistle*.

ON LISTENING PATIENTLY TO THOSE WHO REMIND US OF  
OUR FAILINGS.\*

*Oct. 29.*]—"I AM ready at all times," said St. Gregory the Great, "to listen to any one who sees cause to reprove me; and I reckon those only in the number of my friends who are candid enough to point out to me the means of purifying my soul from its defilements." This was the declaration of a man, who, by his virtues, his abilities, and his writings, was one of the greatest ornaments of the Christian church.

St. Gregory wished to be reminded of his failings; and his reason was, because he was convinced that others could see in him faults which he could not see in himself. He knew that self-love was always ready to cloak over every failing; and that, in order to form a just opinion of himself, it was expedient to ascertain the opinion of others concerning him, and to listen to their reproofs.

In the same spirit of piety, so far from feeling sentiments of ill-will towards those who pointed out to him his failings, he reckoned them in the number of his best friends. He did not attribute their conduct to any bad motive; they reminded him of his failings: and that was to him a sufficient inducement to consider them entitled to the gratitude which is due to benefactors.

Oh! who is my best friend? Is it he who flatters me in my passions—excuses all my weaknesses—and endeavours to make me appear, in my own eyes, different from what I am in the sight of God? No: he is my greatest enemy: for his delusions would lead me to no other than to the pit of eternal

damnation. He only is my sincere friend who reproves me for my faults, and who points out to me the error of my ways. What his motives may be, whether of good will or bad will, is nothing to me. If he remind me of my failings, he does me a real service; and it is my duty to make him a return of gratitude.

Examine whether or not you have profited, hitherto, by the reproofs which you have received from others. Every one will acknowledge that it is unpleasant to receive reproofs, and particularly from an enemy. Do not, however, regard the unpleasantness, but consider whether or not there is just cause for the reproof. If you discover that there is just cause, then reckon the reprover in the number of your best friends, and do not return evil for good, by entertaining sentiments of animosity or ill-will against him.

ON THE BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED FROM CONTRADICTIONS  
AND INSULTS.\*

*Oct. 30* ]—OUR holy mother, the church, has never been without her enemies. She seems always to have been, like her heavenly Spouse, “a sign set up to be contradicted.”—Luke, ii. If the mother, then, be treated in this manner, ought her children to expect better treatment? What is it that she has not had to endure, in every age, either from the malice of persecutors, or from the depravity of her own children? We, perhaps, may never be exposed to the violence of persecuting rulers; but, from false brethren, from the children of the world, we shall have much to endure: “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”—2 Tim. iii. How often is it, that we have to endure sarcasms, and raileries, and false accusations, from the enemies of our holy faith? How frequently have we to endure contradictions, and insults, and ill-treatment of one kind or another, from our friends and acquaintance? How often is our piety

laughed at by the unwise, and our exercises of devotion ridiculed? And what are all these but persecutions—persecutions for justice-sake, the patient endurance of which will insure to us the possession of the kingdom of heaven?

Oh! let us learn to bear, and to forbear. What are the humiliations or pains arising from these trials, when compared with the reward to which we shall be entitled? Does not our Lord say: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake: be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.”—Matt. v. What greater inducement can there be to patience and resignation?

Examine whether you are at all times disposed to endure the insults and contradictions of others with Christian forbearance. You cannot find a safer road to heaven than the one in which your Saviour walked for your example. Nor can you expect to be better treated by the children of the world, than were our Lord, and his blessed Mother, the apostles, all the saints, and even the church itself. In fact, trials like these are testimonies that you are truly the friends of God, and the successors of the saints. Consider them as such, and possess your souls in patience.

#### ON THE CHOICE OF FRIENDS.\*

*Oct. 31.]*—NEVER be in a hurry to admit any one into the number of your select friends; a choice of that kind requires serious consideration. Be prudent, and observe the following rules: never form an intimate friendship with a man who is of much superior rank in society, merely through motives of temporal interest; nor with a man who is much inferior to yourselves, merely that you may show your power over him, or that you may have a person obsequious to your will. It is more advisable that you select your friends from among your equals, or those who are superior to you only in piety, without

any worldly consideration; that, so, you may be at liberty to open your mind to him, and disclose the secrets of your heart without disguise.

Never give your confidence to the man who is ready to admit you, without trial, into the number of his confidential friends: for he will betray, or forsake you, as easily as he admitted you. But prove the man, and when you find that he is worthy, then admit him into your confidence. Select not a young person without experience: but one who can give you good counsel, and be of service to you. Select not one who is a great talker: but one who can keep your secrets, and who is a sincere lover of truth. Select not one who is haughty and gay: but one who is of a decent carriage and modest behaviour. Select not one whom you have reason to believe is addicted to any particular vice: but the person who is attentive to his spiritual duties, and whose example and words may be an encouragement to you.

Examine whether or not you have selected your friends in this manner; too much care cannot be taken in making the selection. A person may easily make a wrong choice, and the consequences may be very fatal. For, how many are led into vice by the example or solicitations of false friends. Nothing, says the wisdom of God, is worthy to be compared to a true friend; and he who has the happiness to find one during the course of his life, may say that he has found a treasure indeed.—*Eccli. vi.*

#### ON ALL-SAINTS.

*Nov. 1.]*—WHATEVER the understanding of man can conceive falls infinitely short of the joys of heaven. Exceeding great must that bliss be, which could not be purchased but by the blood of God. If the torments of the damned in hell are unspeakable, what must be the happiness of the saints in heaven? They are swallowed up in love: they have all that

they desire, and nothing that they fear. "Blessed are they, O Lord, who dwell in thy house, they shall sing forth thy praises for evermore."—Ps. lxxxiii.

Do not we hope to be happy with the saints? Is not "thy kingdom come" our daily prayer? It is: but it will avail us little, unless we fight and conquer as the saints have done. They had their weaknesses as we have ours: but they bravely overcame them; they had their passions, and they courageously subdued them; they had their temptations, and they honourably conquered them; they had their sufferings, and they joyfully submitted to them: and, therefore, have they merited a crown of glory? Have we done as much? We must of necessity do it, or else we shall lose our reward in heaven.

Christians, allege no excuse for not imitating the saints. You have the same God that they had, and his arms are always stretched out to receive you. You have the same advantages, and greater than many of them had. Allege not your constitution as a pretence: you are not more frail than Peter was, nor a greater sinner than Magdalen, nor more unjust than the thief, and yet they are all saints in heaven. Allege not your *calling*, *age*, or *sex*: heaven is full of all ranks, ages, and conditions.

Examine yourselves, and effectually resolve upon imitating the saints. They only, who do this, truly keep their festivals, and will be happy with them. Often read their lives, in order to induce you to an imitation of them. On this day, join with the church in duly celebrating their united triumphs.

#### ON ALL-SOULS.

Nov. 2.]—"It is a holy and wholesome cogitation to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins."—2 Macc. xii. It is a devotion very acceptable to God, because it is a charity done to his friends, who are not in a condition

to help themselves, and are always calling upon us for pity. "Take pity on me," (Job, xix.) is their constant cry. Let us be mindful of them: let us do our utmost to relieve them.

It is not improbable but we may have a parent, a friend, or some relation, suffering at this present time in the flames of purgatory: and can we be so hard hearted as not to relieve them, or, at least, not to contribute to their relief, when it is in our power to do it? Let us succour them: they are reduced to the last extremity of misery. All the torments of this world are but a shadow, when compared to those of purgatory.

If a *cup of cold water* shall not lose its reward, what may we not expect, when, by our prayers, alms, and other good works, we contribute so much to the comfortable relief of these suffering souls? Will they not, when at liberty, appear in our defence at the bar of divine justice? Will they not endeavour to prevent our coming into that place of torment? Undoubtedly they will. "From the gates of hell, O Lord, deliver thy servants. May they rest in peace. Eternal rest give to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them."

Examine yourselves, and be not backward in assisting poor suffering souls in purgatory. Help them by your prayers. Give alms for their relief. Do penance for them, and for your own sins, that you may not have it to do in the world to come. On this day, particularly, join with the church in favour of them.

#### ON THE ETERNAL REWARDS OF THE SAINTS.\*

*Nov. 3.]*—THE saints endured momentary afflictions, and their reward is an eternal weight of glory. They patiently supported the rigours of their short banishment, and now they are arrived at their true country—the abodes of Sion. They sighed, for a few years, after their deliverance, and now their longing hopes are crowned with fruition: they are united to

the object of their love, and they will never more be separated from him. Oh, what happiness! Oh, that we could feel, but for a moment, a taste of that exquisite delight which they enjoy, and with which they will be perpetually inebriated for an endless eternity! How contemptible would all the enjoyments of this world appear in our eyes!

Let us cast up our eyes to heaven, and imagine to ourselves that we behold the whole assembly of the "just made perfect," in the midst of their ineffable and endless transports of pleasure. Let us imagine to ourselves that we behold "thousands of thousands ministering to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand standing before him," (Dan. vii.) and let us say: is there not a place for us amongst that immense multitude?

Let us encourage ourselves, therefore, by the view of the immense rewards of the just. Let us endeavour to be of the number of the just in this life; for thus only shall we be made partakers of their rewards. If we lead a life of sin, we shall be walking in the ways of the reprobate, and what can we expect in such company? If we walk in the broad road, whither will it lead us but to destruction?—Matt. vii. When we view the immense multitudes of the elect, we have motives for hope: but when we view the far greater multitudes of the reprobate, we have too much reason to fear, lest we should, through our own fault, as they have done, lose our crown, and for the sake of temporal things lose those which are eternal.

Examine yourselves, and see in what state you are. Are you reckoned by your virtuous acquaintances in the number of the pious and just? If so; it is a motive for hope. But be not too presumptuous. God alone knows what you are. Remember that no one "stands so firm" but he has reason "to fear lest he fall."—1 Cor. x. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling."—Phil. ii. Persevere to the end, and all will be well with you. It was thus that the saints purchased their ineffable happiness.

## ON DEVOTION TO THE SAINTS.

*Nov. 4.]*—MOSES, by his prayers, prevented the hand of God from falling heavy upon the idolatrous Israelites. Samuel, by his prayers, defeated the Philistines. The prayers of St. Stephen wrought the conversion of his murderer Saul. If the prayers of these saints, and of numberless others, while here on earth, were of such force, can they be possibly less efficacious, now that they are reigning with Christ himself? What can be denied them when they show the wounds which they have bravely received for their Prince's sake? No: their racks and other instruments of torture, must necessarily move their Lord to mercy. Let us implore their patronage.

The devils in hell know our works, and hear the petitions of their impious invokers. And can we believe that the saints in heaven neither know our wants, nor hear our prayers? No doubt, but that in God they see and hear us: "there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner doing penance."—Luke, xv.

O you common protectors of mankind, offer up your prayers at the throne of mercy. We know that the honours you are raised to are above all expression. We know that you are the familiar friends of God, and that thousands have escaped the abyss of hell through your intercession. Visible miracles have been wrought at your shrines, for the purpose of convincing us of the efficacy of your prayers. Chase away, therefore, from us the shades of darkness, with your beams of glory: with compassionate eyes behold our misery: and although you yourselves are in a state of security, be not indifferent about ours.

Examine yourselves, and be punctual in your devotions to the saints in heaven. Say their litanies with a serious attention, and strive to imitate their virtues. Then only is it that they think themselves honoured, when they see you humble



by their example, penitent by their example, self-deniers by their example, and animated to virtue by their example. Have a particular devotion to your angel-guardian, and to your holy patrons. They are in an especial manner appointed to guard your souls.

#### ON SUBDUING OUR ILL TEMPERS.\*

*Nov. 5*]—It is not uncommon to see persons, who are regular in the exterior duties of religion, and who do not appear to be deficient in any of the essentials requisite for salvation, subject to many ill-temperers, which would give scandal even in worldlings. Some, by the elevation of their rank, think that they are entitled to treat their dependants with every kind of insolence and contempt; that they may testify their anger against them in any manner they please; that they may interpret every miss-word into an affront; and that they may hold every such imaginary affront in perpetual remembrance. Others indulge ill-temper against their equals upon every least contradiction or provocation. Others are morose, and full of malice and spleen, because they are naturally of an unrelenting and unforgiving temper.

But to what does all this tend? Does it not tend to bring religion itself into contempt, and to cause the enemies of God to blaspheme against all that is good? What! the world will say, does piety work so little change in the dispositions of corrupt nature? Can a person pretend to purity of conscience, and yet be so haughty to his inferiors—so displeasing to his equals—so forbidding in his manners, and so overbearing towards all who have dealings with him? Oh! imperfect Christians! what injury do you do to the cause of piety and religion! Remember the words of St. Paul: “Charity is kind: it thinketh no evil: it beareth all things: it endureth all things.”—1 Cor. xiii. Without this charity your piety will profit you nothing.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved henceforward to be mild and humble in all things, and to all persons. Whatever your rank in life may be, remember that you are under the same laws as the poorest of your fellow-creatures. There is not one more dignified than St. Paul, and yet he made himself "all to all, on purpose to gain all."—1 Cor. ix. Follow his example.

ON SUBJECTING OUR NATURAL PROPENSITIES TO THE MOTIONS  
OF GRACE.\*

*Nov. 6.]*—THERE is something peculiar in the character of every individual. We inherit it, as it were, from nature ; and when it is not made subservient to the motions of grace, and directed into a proper channel, it generally becomes the predominant passion, and is the source from which most of our sinful actions proceed.

In the examples of the saints, we witness the beneficial effects which may be produced by subduing this natural propensity, and turning it to good. St. Paul was naturally of a violent and determined disposition ; he was touched by grace, and his fiery temper became an ardent zeal, which inflamed the whole world. St. Augustine was remarkably inconstant, both in his opinions and in his affections. He was enlightened from above ; and where is there one who was more firmly attached to his faith, or more intimately united to God by love ? St. Jerome was austere and intolerant ; but he exercised his austerity on himself, and his intolerance against the enemies of religion. St. Teresa was susceptible of any impression. The impression of divine love was made on her heart ; and what wonderful works did it enable her to perform for the advance of that amiable virtue ! St. Francis Xavier was fond of glory. He consecrated his heart to God : and what labours did he endure, what wonders did he perform, not for his own glory, but for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. St.

Francis of Sales was naturally hasty and irritable; but his quickness of feeling, by being made subservient to grace, converted him into a pattern of mildness, and made him the most amiable of men. Oh! that, like the saints, we could turn our most dangerous enemies into the means of acquiring the greatest spiritual blessings.

Examine yourselves, and see what are the propensities which nature has implanted in you; whatever they may be, reflect that, if nature has the direction of them, they will be to you the source of many evils. Subject them to the motions of grace; and, instead of evil, they will be to you the source of every good.

#### ON SUBDUING OUR HABITUAL FAILINGS.\*

*Nov. 7.]*—WHERE there are habitual failings there is no true piety, no true sanctity. Habit may become a second nature; but the habit of sin, however deeply it may be rooted, must be conquered. Violence, indeed, will be required: but the “kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent only bear it away.”—Matt. xi. “It is to no purpose,” says St. Augustine, to “plead that habit drags you on to the commission of the same crimes. Watch over yourselves, and you will learn how to resist temptation. The more confirmed is your habit, the more attention is required. The *tongue is a restless evil*: be careful to keep it within due bounds.....If you keep it within due bounds to-day, you will find it more easy to keep it within due bounds to-morrow, I speak from experience. If your victory be not complete to-morrow, you will, at least, have acquired strength to resist it, from the efforts you made against it the preceding day. A habit may, generally, be essentially weakened, or conquered in three days. Oh! what encouragement is held out to us to persevere in our endeavours to be freed from so great an evil! What a blessing, what a consolation it is, to be relieved from the heavy

servitude of habitual sin !.....I know that it is a difficult task to break a criminal habit ; I have experienced it myself. But the fear of the judgments of God enabled me to conquer the habit of swearing. When I read his holy law, I was seized with trembling. I resisted my criminal habit ; I called upon his holy name, for in him I placed my whole confidence, and he graciously assisted me to renounce that criminal habit entirely. At present, nothing appears to me more easy than to avoid that profane, that impious custom.”—*Serm.* 37. Every other criminal habit may be subdued in the same manner. Oh ! why will we not apply to the grace of God, in the same manner as St. Augustine did.

Examine into your general conduct, and if you find that you are habituated to any failing, wage war against it without delay. You have not more criminal habits than St Augustine had before his conversion. And you cannot have a more encouraging example to resist them, than is to be found in him. He became a most eminent saint ; you may become the same.

#### ON THE VICE OF LYING.\*

*Nov.* 8.]—THE vice of lying is odious in the sight both of God and man. In the sight of God, it is declared, in the Scriptures, to be an abomination ; and the severest threats are uttered against it. “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.”—*Prov.* xii. “He that speaketh lies shall perish.”—*Ib.* xix. “He that gathereth treasures by a lying tongue is vain and foolish, and shall stumble upon the snares of death .....a lying witness shall perish.”—*Ib.* xxi. “Thou shalt destroy all that speak a lie.”—*Ps.* v.

The same severe condemnation of this vice is contained in the New Testament. Our Blessed Saviour, speaking to the unbelieving Jews, says : “You are of your father, the devil, and the desires of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and he abode not in the truth,

because the truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof.” —John, viii. “Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without, are dogs, and sorcerers, and unchaste, and murderers, and servers of idols, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie.” —Apoc. xxii.

In the eyes of men, likewise, this vice appears in the most odious colours. A liar is despised by all, even by those who are the most reprobate in other respects. To give a man *the lie*, is reckoned one of the greatest affronts that can be offered. It is a vice that meets with general reprobation from all ranks and conditions; rich and poor, learned and unlearned, Christian and heathen. Oh! how detestable must that vice be, which is execrated equally both by good and bad, which is equally odious in the sight both of God and man. Let us shun this abominable vice for the time to come. Let us, as the apostle says, “put away lying, and speak the truth every man with his neighbour, for we are members one of another.” —Eph. iv.

Examine whether you are addicted to this vice. Be resolved to forsake it for the time to come, and never to tell a lie, were it even to save the world. Let your prayer be with the wise man: “Two things I have asked of thee, O Lord, deny them not to me before I die: remove far from me vanity, and lying words.” —Prov. xxx.

THE FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF A FALL AFTER A LIFE OF PIETY.\*

Nov. 9.]—MAY we not flatter ourselves that, after years spent in the fervent service of God, the danger of shipwreck is past, and that we shall sail calmly and securely into port? No: the danger increases as we proceed. Do we not all experience that, after a certain time, our fervour begins to relax, and our scrupulous attention to the fulfilment of the pious

exercises, which we had prescribed to ourselves, begins to diminish? And to what will this lead, if not checked in time? “The soul,” says St. Chrysostome, “does not stand in need of much encouragement in the beginning of a new life. She is then glowing with love, and she runs on with ardour in the way of the commandments. But this fire will diminish, unless it be kept alive by continually adding to it fresh fuel. Then is the time that she may expect the most violent assaults of the devil. Pirates go not in search of vessels that are leaving port without lading. They lay in wait for vessels returning home, freighted with the richest cargoes. The craft of the devil is the same. His chief object is, to capture the soul which is laden with spiritual riches, acquired by the exercises of fasting, prayer, alms-deeds, divine love, and other virtues. Then it is that he bears down on our vessel with full sail, in hopes of taking away the spoils. A defeat, on these occasions, is attended with the worst of consequences, for seldom does the soul rise again to anything that is good. In the beginning of a conversion, the soul may fall from want of experience, and immediately rise again. But to fall, after many years spent in piety, can be owing to nothing but to criminal negligence—a negligence which renders the soul undeserving of the special grace requisite for a recovery from that unhappy state.”—*Hom. 8. de Ora.* Oh! let us always go on with fear and trembling.

Let us remember the words of St. Paul: “It is impossible for those, who were once enlightened, have tasted also the heavenly gift.....and are fallen away, to be renewed again to penance.”—*Heb. vi.*

Examine yourselves, and be always on the watch against the encroachments of the enemy. Take the alarm immediately as you perceive the least diminution of your primitive fervour. Be convinced that you are secure only as long as you are advancing in the ways of virtue, and increasing in the love of God.

ON ATTENDING TO THE PROGRESS OF TEMPTATION.\*

*Nov. 10.*—THE enemy does not attack the soul of the pious Christian like a roaring lion. He is well aware, that such a soul is surrounded with a strong wall, which is not to be broken through by open violence. He adopts a different plan. He comes with the olive-branch in his hand, and by artful insinuations, under the mask of friendship, seeks to induce her to open the gates a little, and then a little more, until a free passage is open to him.

We are not to flatter ourselves, therefore, if we find that we are not openly tempted to the commission of a grievous sin. The enemy will proceed with more caution. He will suggest an improper thought, or endeavour to elicit an unguarded glance of the eye. If he succeed in this, he will suggest a criminal desire. If this desire be consented to, he will advance more boldly, and by repeatedly suggesting the desire, lead the soul at length to the commission of the crime. Oh! may we not then say, that we have opened the gates of the fortress to him? And will he not rush forward like a roaring lion, and spread desolation over our whole interior?

Alas! how many are lost through not attending to the progress of temptation! A little indulgence given to sensual pleasures seems to portend no serious consequences. But, one little indulgence leads to another; and when once we slip back, who shall say that we shall ever regain our former situation? A penitent heart the Lord will never despise. But how seldom is it that the Christian, who has once tasted the sweets of piety, and runs again after the husks of swine, is ever renewed again to sincere repentance? The grace of God indeed, is all-powerful: but hope is almost hopeless in a case like this, were we to judge only from experience.

Examine into the state of your souls: and if you find that temptation is making progress, put a stop to it without delay.

If you do not resist the beginnings of sin, you will soon be hurried into the abyss. And when fallen into the abyss, what assurance have you that you will ever be extricated from it?

ON THE CONSTANT WATCHFULNESS OF A CHRISTIAN.\*

*Nov. 11.]*—IN the moments of fervour, we imagine that it is easy to conquer any temptation. At the time that we feel a disgust for the passion to which we have basely yielded, and have, as it were, fallen out with ourselves for the sensual gratification in which we have indulged, then we think that our enemy is subdued, and that the ways of virtue will, henceforward, be alone attractive to us. But oh! how little do we know human nature, when we reason in this manner! If vice be odious in our eyes, merely on account of the disgust which the commission of it has excited, that disgust will soon wear away, and vice will again resume its attractive sway over us. The love of God alone will cause us to hate sin with a sincere hatred.

Let us not then deceive ourselves by delusive imaginations. "We must be always on our guard, for we are engaged in a perpetual war. Unless we take care, the enemy will surprise us, when we are the least aware of him. A ship, sometimes, passes safe through hurricanes and tempests; yet, if the faithful pilot, even in a calm, has not great care of it, a single wave raised by a sudden gust may sink her. It does not matter to the enemy what means he makes use of, provided he can but destroy the vessel. In this life, we sail, as it were, in an unknown sea. We meet with rocks, shelves, and sands. Sometimes, we are becalmed; and at other times, we find ourselves tossed and buffeted by a storm. Thus we are never secure, never out of danger: and if we fall asleep we are sure to perish. We have a most experienced and intelligent pilot, ready to place himself at the helm of our vessel, even Jesus Christ himself, who will conduct us safe into the haven of salvation, if we



do not, by our own supineness, cause our perdition.”—*Butler SS. LL. Jan. 5.*

Examine yourselves, and consider that you are never secure; but that you are, on the contrary, in the most imminent danger of falling, when you seem to stand on the firmest ground. Be assured that the hatred of vice will not long maintain its ground in your souls, unless that hatred arise from the true love of God, and a preference of him before all other things.

#### ON FRATERNAL CORRECTION.

*Nov. 12.*]—EVERY one is obliged to prevent the sins of his neighbour, when he is able to do it, either by himself or by others. This duty is so obligatory, that it is in vain to think of possessing God without the practice of it. “God has given to every one the charge of his neighbour.”—*Eccl. xvii.* And yet, alas! how little do Christians reflect upon it! how few concern themselves about it.

Had we a true love for God, or our neighbour, we should be far more zealous in this duty than we have hitherto been. No loyal subject can, without concern, hear his prince ill spoken of: no loving child can see his father on the point of being murdered, and not run to his assistance: God is our King and our Father; and can we tamely sit still, and hear his name blasphemed, and see him persecuted by the crimes of sinners, without appearing in his defence? This would be an evident sign of our want of love. Again, did we see a person going to cut his own throat, or running unto a fire, we should immediately stop his hand, and pull him back. Nay, were we to see a sheep or cow labouring for life in a deep water, we should not fail to give them all the help we could. And can we see a Christian, a brother in Jesus Christ, running headlong into the pit of hell, and not endeavour to stop him in his course? Ah! it is too true; “an ass falls, and there is somebody to lift it up: a soul perishes, and no one is concerned about it.”—*St. Bern.*

Christians, if this be your neglect, I must tell you that you have no love for your neighbour. Can you see your innocent brother's life corrupted by the ill example of others, and not prevent it, when it is in your power? Can you see so many souls perish, for whom Christ died?

Examine yourselves, and let neither fear nor the apprehension of incurring displeasure, hinder you from preventing the known vices of your neighbour. This may be effected by good counsels, reprehensions, chastisements, or complaints, as occasion shall require. Remember that this is the duty of every Christian, although more particularly of pastors, parents, and those in office.

#### ON HUMILITY.

*Nov. 13.]*—“LEARN of me, because I am meek and humble of heart.”—Matt. xi. Dearest Lord, of whom shall we learn to be humble but of thee? We cannot learn it of ourselves, for our very nature is made up of pride. We cannot learn it from the world, for it is full of pride likewise. The devil cannot teach it—he is damned for pride. Christians, there is no raising the edifice of virtue, but upon the foundation of humility. Although we may be just in our dealings, free from intemperance, kind to our neighbours, and decline all criminal engagements with the world, yet, without humility, we shall never be saved. Christ has said it: “Unless you be as little children, you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven.”—Matt. xviii. Are we as humble as children? Are we as innocent?

Alas! we are sinners. Let us, therefore, humble ourselves at the sight of our misery. Do we suffer from the world and from our passions? Let us humble ourselves under these misfortunes. Are we distracted in prayer, cold in devotion, and subject to many failings? Let us humble

ourselves under these weaknesses. We must be humble before we can enter heaven.

O God, give me an humble heart. "A contrite and humble heart, thou wilt never despise."—Ps. l. Thou didst not despise the humility of David, nor the humility of Mary. Thou didst not despise the humility of the publican, nor the humble tears of Magdalen. The humble are they whom thou raisest to eternal glory.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved to practise this lesson of humility. Every one is obliged to it. Although nature be averse, yet, by the grace of God, you may make it bend. Crave, therefore, his grace, in your most fervent prayers. Always entertain a mean opinion of yourselves: and remember that you must be *little* here, in order to be *great* hereafter.

#### ON MOTIVES OF HUMILITY.

*Nov. 14.]*—WHAT were we from *eternity*? Nothing. What have been in *time*? Drawn out of the dark abyss of nothing; conceived in sin, and grievous sinners. What *are* we? Miserable dust, incapable of a good thought; endowed, indeed, with a *memory*, but forgetful of our Maker; dignified with an *understanding*, but ungratefully we slight him; privileged with a *will*, but we rebel against him. Is not this enough to humble us?

What *shall* we be? *Saints* or *devils*? This is all uncertain. If we depend upon the will of God, his blessed will is not known to us; if on ourselves, nothing is more inconstant; if on our good works, it is doubtful whether they are accepted. If we depend on the sanctity of our calling, that will not do; Judas was an apostle, and yet he is lost for ever. The uncertainty of our future state must be motive enough to humble us. Lord, if "no man living shall be justified in thy sight," (Ps. cxlii.)—if, when we have done our best, we are unprofitable servants, what will become of us?

The saints humble themselves in their kind offices for us—the angels by protecting us—the Mother of God in praying for us, and shall we do nothing for ourselves? Cast thyself down, my soul—stoop dust and ashes—see heaven has humbled itself for thee. Exalt not thyself, thou art poor and miserable.

Examine yourselves, and take the advice of St. Peter: “Be you humbled under the powerful hand of God.”—1 Pet. v. You cannot want motives to induce you to it. Shun all occasions of praise. Be not puffed up with the flatteries of the world. Patiently submit to reproaches and contempts. Do this, and it will be a demonstration of an humble heart.

#### ON THE ADVANTAGES OF HUMILITY.

*Nov. 15.*]—THERE is no sacrifice more acceptable in the sight of God than an humble heart. “He resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.”—James, iv. It was humility that raised the Blessed Virgin Mary to the most eminent dignity of being Mother of God: she herself has said it. It was a profound humility that justified the publican. It was the humility of the Son of God that redeemed the world. It is humility that fills heaven with glorious saints. How great should we be, did we humble ourselves!

Nothing can contribute more to the tranquillity of a soul, than an humble heart. Do the waves of temptation swell very high? Humility calms them. Does a corrupt world lay its snares? Humility escapes them. Does the devil tempt us with his insinuating artifices? Humility defeats them. Humility listens not to the demands of pride or vain glory; it cares not for the insults of wicked men; it rejoices in poverty; it receives afflictions with submissive patience: nothing can come amiss to the humble heart.

Oh! how ought we to bless our bountiful God, for affording us daily opportunities of saving our souls by the practice of

this virtue! If it be that we have not an eminent gift of prayer, let us humble ourselves under the privation. If it be that we are not able to fast, or to give an alms, at least, we may humble ourselves. Our repeated sins, and daily failings—our insufficiency to perform the least good work—our uncertain eternity—every serious thought of our lives, affords us fresh occasions of humbling ourselves.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to obtain an humble heart. It is a sacrifice the most acceptable to God, and the most beneficial to your souls. The purchase may be difficult, and that very difficulty ought justly to humble you. How perfectly humble were the saints! They desired to be despised by a deceitful world.

#### ON THE CHARACTER OF AN HUMBLE CHRISTIAN.

*Nov. 16.]*—THE humble Christian has always a mean opinion of himself. He has always before his eyes his weakness and his misery. The consideration of his past offences make up his morning thoughts. His insufficiency in everything is his daily meditation. The uncertainty of his future state is his evening recollection, and closes his eyes to sleep. He is fully convinced that the severest racks, the loss of friends and goods, the blackest calumnies, and the most exasperating provocations, fall far short of what he deserves. On this account, he receives the greatest chastisements with a patient resignation—he suffers all in the deepest silence of a joyful heart. Far from complaining, he cries out with Micheas: “I will bear the indignation of my God, because I have sinned against him.”—Mic. vii. Is it so with us? We have been sinners, and are we thus resigned to the divine appointments of heaven? Do we not murmur at Providence? Are we not impatient under the smallest trials?

The humble Christian never thinks ill of his neighbour. He acknowledges himself to be the most unworthy of men; and on

that account he is not concerned to see others above him. He never speaks of his neighbour's defects, because he often thinks of his own. I fear that we do not feel these humble sentiments. On the contrary, do we not eagerly grasp at the vain applauses of men? Do we not speak of our neighbour's failings? Do we not think ourselves above him in many respects, and sometimes envy his better fortune? Let us put it to our consciences.

The humble Christian desires even to be despised: because the more he is so, the greater are the opportunities of improving his humility. Hence, in imitation of his Divine Master, he avoids all occasions of praise, and is never troubled but when he meets them. Alas! how much do we want of this humility.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to imitate this blessed character. Offer up some prayer to that effect every day. Say, with St. Augustin: "Take, O Lord, from me the spirit of pride, and give me the treasure of thy humility."

#### ON MEEKNESS.

*Nov. 17.]*—THERE are two kinds of meekness: one regards ourselves, the other our neighbour. We are meek to ourselves, when we gently suppress, or quietly submit to our natural imperfections. We are meek to our neighbour, when we forgive all injuries from our hearts, and do good for evil. Every disciple of Jesus Christ is bound to practise this two-fold meekness. And do we do it? Are we mild to ourselves, when we fret and vex at our unavoidable weaknesses? when we are in a passion at ourselves, upon every oversight and indiscretion? Alas! these uneasinesses cannot be the effects of a meek heart. Are we mild to our neighbour, when we are murdering his character by repeated calumnies? when we are offering violence to his goods or person? Are we mild to our neighbour, when we expose his imperfections, aggravate his failings, and

rashly censure his most innocent actions? No: these are marks, not of a meek, but of an uncharitable soul.

“Learn of me,” says our dearest Lord, “because I am meek and humble of heart.”—Matt. xi. Let us learn his meekness in the manger, and under the roof of Mary. Let us learn his meekness through the course of his mission, and on the Mount of Calvary: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, not opening his mouth.”—Isa. liii. Christians, he was meek for our example.

O Jesus, grant me the grace of meekness. I know that it is a virtue the most acceptable to thee, and the most advantageous to myself. I know that “blessed are the meek” (Matt. v.), and that they only shall possess the land—the land of the living.

Examine yourselves, and earnestly sue for the grace of meekness. It is the gift of God, and it must come from him. Bridle your passions: be affable to every one: receive your sufferings with a peaceable mind. In time of tranquillity, labour to lay up a stock of meekness, that it may be your security against all ensuing storms.

#### ON POVERTY.

Nov. 18.]—FROM eternity the Son of God possesses in heaven the unspeakable riches of his glory: yet, because *poverty* is not there, he must leave them all, at least in appearance, to clothe himself in the habit of a *poor* man. How great a value does he set upon poverty, although it be so much detested by a wicked world! He was born in poverty: he lived in poverty; and he died in poverty, “not having a place whereon to lay his head.”—Matt. viii. His conversation was with the poor. He chose poor men for his apostles, and he made them the happy instruments of the conversion of the world. We are Christians, and do we imitate the poverty of Christ? It was his voluntary choice: and is it ours? Let us be ashamed to see the God of heaven and earth in the habit

of a poor man, while we, dust and ashes, are exalting ourselves, and lavishing away in vanity the bread of widows and crying orphans: while we have our hearts fixed on riches, and cannot feel the want of them but with the utmost impatience. This is not to imitate the poverty of Christ. "Blessed are the poor in spirit."—Matt. v. Yes: they are truly blessed both in this world and in the world to come. They are blessed here; because they are free from those cares, which are perpetual stings to a heart fixed on riches. They are blessed in heaven; because *to them appertains that glorious kingdom*. Sweet Jesus, grant us a true Christian poverty. We know that it is acceptable to thy divine goodness, and of great benefit to our souls. We know that they, "who would be rich, fall into temptation, and the snare of the devil."—1 Tim. vi.

Examine yourselves, and labour to obtain this necessary virtue. To be *really* poor by *choice*, is a gospel counsel to those who would be perfect: but to be poor in *spirit*, is an universal duty. If you are blessed with plenty, relieve the poor, and "possess what you have, as if you possessed it not."—2 Cor. vi. If you are poor by condition, be contented with your lot, and resign yourselves to the will of Providence, which liberally provides for the meanest creatures. You must be poor on earth, if you would be rich in heaven.

#### ON CHASTITY.

*Nov. 19.*—CHASTITY is the lily of virtues: it assimilates us to angels. "Chastity," says St. Jerome, "has its martyrdom:" for truly, the worst of punishments are not harder to be endured, than the violent attacks made against it. How many have been subdued by impurity, who could not be overthrown by the sharpest torments. Let us then preserve the rich treasure of chastity: it is the fairest virtue of soul and body.

We must be chaste, before we can think of inheriting



heaven. None but the "clean of heart" shall dwell in those tabernacles: "nothing defiled shall enter there."—Apoc. xx. No room is to be found there for impurity committed either in thought, word, or deed; nor is there room for unchaste desires, or wicked company: *their* habitation is in everlasting flames. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they only shall possess God in a happy eternity."—Matt. v.

Christians, we want not motives to excite in us a love of this necessary virtue. The whole life of Christ is an astonishing example of the most consummate chastity. His blessed Mother sets an incomparable lesson of perfect purity. The glorious martyrs laying down their lives, the virgins, and confessors, retiring into wildernesses, and immuring themselves, in order to preserve their chastity, are speaking motives to induce us to the practice of it.

Examine yourselves, and let it be your principal endeavour to purchase and preserve this angelical virtue. For that purpose, set a guard on your senses, and particularly your eyes. Shun all occasions of sin, and chiefly bad company. Be fervent in prayer, attentive to the word of God, and diligent in frequenting the sacraments. In *pure spirits* only does God reside; and they only rest eternally in him.

#### ON MODESTY.

*Nov. 20.*]—MODESTY is *three-fold*; as it regards our *words*, *dress*, and *carriage*. We observe a modesty in our *words*, when we suffer nothing of evil or impertinence to escape from our lips; when we speak but little, and in due circumstances of time and place. We observe a modesty in *dress*, when we affect no vanity, and decently clothe ourselves according to our condition. We are modest in *behaviour*, when we avoid curiosity, and all irregular gestures; when we restrain our looks, and are courteous to every body. Is our comportment such? Do we labour to obtain this pleasing virtue? We

ought to do so. "Let your modesty," says St. Paul, "be known to all men."—Phil. iv.

Words cannot make that impression on the heart which is made by the power of example. "Come," said St. Francis of Assisium, to one of his brethren, "come, let us go and preach." He went forth, and after he had walked about the town for a while, he returned home. "Father," said the brother, "why did we not preach?" "We have done it," answered the saint, "by our modest behaviour, and serious looks. We have preached by example, much more effectually than we could have done by words." Let us, like this saint, edify our neighbour by a modest life. The good effects that it will have on him are incalculable.

The blessed Virgin Mary is the patroness of modesty. "She was," says St. Ambrose, "humble of heart, grave in discourse, of a prudent mind, and few words. There was nothing sour in her looks, provoking in her words, or indecent in her actions. Her gestures were not unbecoming, nor her mien loose. The modesty of her body gave a certain demonstration of that of her soul." Let us beg her prayers, that we may partake of it.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to obtain a Christian modesty. For that purpose, shun light airy company, and let your conversation be with the modest. What a comfort will it be to you in your last hour, to have contributed to the salvation of souls by your modest lives! "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."—Matt. v.

#### ON OBEDIENCE TO GOD.

*Nov. 21.]*—OBEDIENCE is a sacrifice so very acceptable to God, that all the holocausts of the old law could never equal it. Abraham never offered so grateful a victim, as when he readily obeyed the voice of heaven in sacrificing his son, nor

the apostles, as when, in obedience to the call of Christ, they immediately left all, and followed him. True it is, "Obedience is better than sacrifice."—1 Kings, xv.

The sun obeyed Joshua, and *stood still for a whole day*. The earth obeyed Moses, and *swallowed up alive Core and his adherents*. The sea obeyed him, when he and his army marched safely through it. The rain obeyed Elias, and fire also, consuming the two companies of fifty men each. The devils obeyed the apostles, and wild beasts the holy fathers of the desert. All creatures are made to obey and serve us; and shall we alone refuse to obey the God who made both us and them? Lord, command what thou wilt, I will obey thee. Thou hast commanded me to love thee with my whole soul, and I will obey thee. Thou hast commanded me to love my neighbour as myself: I will obey.

Christians, let us do so: let us submit our reason to the divine truths: let us subject our wills to the will of God, and be directed by it in all we do. By this light, we shall never err: with this guide, we shall never stray: with this comforter, we shall never be dejected: with this encourager, we shall never be confounded. We must either obey God, or the devil.

Examine yourselves, and let the course of your lives be a constant obedience to the will of God. Remember, it is a virtue the most acceptable to him, because it is the sacrifice of your will and hearts. For that reason, be very punctual in all your duties, and be ever mindful of those belonging to your state of life. Slight not small faults: but, remembering always that they are displeasing to God, apply your utmost endeavours against them.

#### ON OBEDIENCE TO SUPERIORS.

*Nov. 22.]*—OBEDIENCE is a virtue of universal extent. It obliges Christians of every state and profession to the practice

of it. We must obey God in carefully fulfilling even the least of his commandments. We must obey the church in matters of faith. We must obey the king, parents, pastors, and superiors, and all those higher powers which the divine goodness has placed over us; as we shall otherwise have to answer for our neglect at the tribunal of his justice. "He that hears you, hears me; he that despises you, despises me."—Luke, x.

The life of Christ is an admirable example of consummate obedience to superior powers. He was ever obedient to his Father. "He came into the world to fulfil his will," (Ps. xxxix.): Father, "not my will, but thine be done."—Matt. xxvi. He had rather die than not be obedient. During thirty years, he lived in obedience to his mother and St. Joseph: *he was subject to them*. "Who was subject?" says St. Bernard: "God. To whom? To men. He, whom the powers of heaven obey, was subject to Mary. Learn, therefore, man, to obey: earth, learn to be subject: dust, learn to submit." Subjects, learn to obey your king; Christians, your pastors; children, your parents; servants, your masters. Do we imitate this obedience of our Saviour, when we are ever murmuring at the commands of superiors, and seldom obey, but when compelled to it?

Our greatest happiness in this life, is to be obedient to those whom God has placed over us. Say not, that the obedient Christian is oftentimes a prey to envy, anger, or impatience: say not, that he is full of discontents. No: these are the just punishments of a *disobedient* heart. The *obedient* are meek, chaste, humble: they are the only good Christians.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved to practise this obedience to superiors: It is the mother of virtues. Obey them readily, without demur, cheerfully without murmuring, and obey them in everything that is not contrary to the law of God.

## ON BLIND OBEDIENCE.

*Nov. 23.*]—BLIND obedience is not a submission to the will of superiors in matters of conscience; but a ready and cheerful subjection to them in things which are not manifestly contrary to the law of God. Can we say that we practise this obedience, at the time when we murmur at their commands; when we reason the case with them, or dispute the matter before we comply? No: if we sincerely desire to purchase this virtue, we must make a sacrifice of our will and reason, and take for our only guide the will of God.

Both our will and understanding are so desperately wounded by original sin, that there is an absolute necessity of their being governed and directed. The way to heaven is so very narrow, that it is impossible to go along it without a guide. How many have tumbled into the pit of hell, because they would have no guide but their weak selves! Happy is the blindly obedient soul! She is embarked in a vessel, where she may sleep secure. She need not be under alarm lest she should not arrive safe at the wished-for port, for Jesus Christ sits at the helm. “Let us go where we will, we shall find no rest, but in an humble subjection to the will of a superior.”—*Kempis.*

O God, give me this humble spirit. Let me reason as I please, the best reason must be to obey thy will. I know that there is not a more sovereign balsam, for a wounded conscience, than an entire subjection to the guidance of my director. This will encourage my fearful soul, and put me in the way of possessing thee, my God.

Examine yourselves, and the more readily to practise this lesson of obedience, consider every superior as the vicegerent of Jesus Christ. Pay no attention to their faults, but consider their authority. Examine not their reasons, but submit to them as your judges. Should Christ himself in person order

you to do a thing, you would immediately obey him; and why not obey superiors in the same manner, when their authority is derived from that of Christ?

#### ON PRUDENCE.

*Nov. 24.*]—CHRISTIAN prudence is, “to seek God in all things.” It may be truly called a cardinal virtue, for the eternal welfare of our souls depends upon it. To disengage our affections from creatures, to bear afflictions with a true resignation, to fix our hearts on God, to labour for the possession of him, who is our sovereign good, to consider him as the end of all our actions, to esteem the world as dross to gain Christ; these are the happy effects of Christian prudence.

Lord, grant me this virtue. I know that, possessing it, I cannot fail of being for ever happy. Directed by prudence, I shall entertain a due contempt for the world; and I shall improve every circumstance of life in order to eternity. Without it, I shall be a slave to everlasting chains. “Lord, let me know myself, and thee.”—*St Aug.*

Let us look into the Christian world, and see how eagerly it grasps after fading goods. How does it contrive, solicit, watch, and labour for mere smoke? What pains does the merchant take for a little dust? and shall not we do as much for heaven? Is it the part of *prudence* to toil for the convenience of a few years, and leave eternity to chance? True it is, that “the children of this world are wiser in their generation, than are the children of light.”—*Luke, xvi.*

Examine yourselves, and beg of God the virtue of prudence, that whatever you do, may be done for him; there can be no true wisdom, but in seeking God. Always remember the end for which you were created; and that to swerve from this end, is to go in opposition to faith and reason. In all your sufferings, be resigned to the will of Providence. Let it be your study to know yourselves.

## ON JUSTICE.

*Nov. 25.*]—JUSTICE is two-fold: as it regards *God*, and our *neighbour*. We are just to God when we pay him the homage due to his majesty: when we are grateful for the favours he has bestowed on us: when we heartily repent of all our past transgressions, and make the best reparation we can for them. And have we done so? We are just to God when we carefully walk in his holy commandments: when we perform all our actions, with that due care, as if each of them were to be the last of our lives. Is this our behaviour? “Lord, direct my steps, that no injustice may rule over me.”—Ps. cxviii. Let my heart be fixed on thee: let my affections be guided by thee: let thy will be mine, and let all my works be directed to thy glory.

We are just to our neighbour when we make this principle, “do as you would be done by,” the golden rule of our lives. And is it our rule? Do we not injure our neighbour in his goods or person? Have we never slandered him? or judged rashly of him? or rejoiced at his misfortunes? or exposed his failings? or misconstrued his innocent, and even pious actions. All this is unjust.

Christians, let us not be so unjust to our neighbour: let us suspend all rash judging: let us always speak well of him: let us congratulate him in his prosperity: let us condole with him under affliction: let us defend his innocence, excuse his failings, and lay aside all dislikes: let us live in peace and amity with him. Has not Christ done so? Has he not commanded us to do so? Are not our neighbours redeemed by his blood? and are they not our own flesh?

Examine yourselves, and in your most fervent prayers, petition for this necessary virtue of *justice* both to God and man. Be convinced that there can be no hopes of happiness

without the practice of it. "As God is just, so he loves justice."—Ps. x. None but "the just shall live for ever."—Wisd. v.

#### ON FORTITUDE.

*Nov. 26.*]—BOTH Sampson and David had strength enough to tear lions in pieces, yet they wanted true *fortitude*, because they would not overcome themselves. A great many Christians have the courage to fast, watch, and chastise their bodies with disciplines, and hair shirts; and yet too often fall a prey to sin. Alas! how many have endured prisons, who could not hold out against the soft allurements of sinful pleasures? How many have fallen by the hand of a Dalilah, who contemned that of the bloodiest executioner? And had these true courage? No: to command our own hearts, to defeat the artifices of pride, luxury, envy, and vain-glory: this is the most perfect, and heroic fortitude. "Better is he who commands his soul, than he that conquers cities."—Prov. xvi.

Nothing is able to shake the courage of the true Christian. Like a rock, he stands immoveable, in defiance of winds and tempests. He is neither cast down by the storms of adversity, nor puffed up in the calm of peace; his care is, to subject himself to the will of God in every particular: and there is his victory.

It is this fortitude that crowned so many glorious saints in heaven. How can we think of dying with a Stephen, or of being broiled on a gridiron with a Laurence, when we have not courage to watch over our own hearts, to retrench self-love, or to check our passions; but, on the contrary, are ever yielding to them? Shall we be able to endure the sword, when we start back from the point of a needle? Lord, give me this strengthening grace of fortitude, that my enemy may never prevail over me. Without it, I am nothing: with it, I



shall be enabled to fight thy battles, and on all occasions assert thy cause, without being afraid, or ashamed of the reproaches of the world.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to obtain this noble virtue. Desire the blessed saints, who always carry about them the bright marks of their courage, to join their prayers with you for this end. "Put on the armour of God, that you may stand your ground against the snares of the devil."—Eph. vi. Always remember that, "to overcome yourselves is the greatest fortitude."—*St. Ambrose.*

#### ON TEMPERANCE.

*Nov. 27.]*—TEMPERANCE is *moderation* in whatever relates to soul or body. It is a virtue so necessary, that there is no going to heaven without it. By as many ways as our corrupt nature is subject to excess, by so many is temperance absolutely necessary to keep it within bounds. What numbers of Christians exceed in diet, sleep, and clothing! How many, by these things, make gods of their bellies, and idols of themselves! How many, with the rich glutton, damn themselves by a brutish intemperance. Is not temperance, in these cases, indispensably necessary, in order to moderate these criminal extravagances?

Our hearts are very subject to evil thoughts, and our tongues are liable to excess by lying, detracting, swearing, cursing, and a thousand other ways; and can we fix better limits to them than what temperance prescribes? That is, can we have any better knowledge than to know *when, where, how much, in what manner, and to what end to speak?* Let us earnestly pray for this great virtue.

Temperance it is that must heal the pride, blindness, and all the distempers of our understanding. It is temperance that must check, and confine within bounds the exorbitant passions and desires of our heart. It is temperance that

must bring us to a serene state of mind, and make us happy both in this world and in the next. O God, bestow upon me this rich treasure—a treasure which thy saints sought after, and always carried about with them.

Examine yourselves, and by fervent prayer—by a due watch over your hearts, and by keeping a proper medium in every action of your lives, labour to obtain this cardinal virtue. Let not excess, but necessity be your guide. In all the interior and spiritual exercises of your souls, let temperance be your rule. Thus will you obtain a peaceable heart, the only means of advancing in a devout life.

#### ON THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

*Nov. 28.]—God is everywhere.* He is in the midst of us—in the centre of our hearts; and have we known it? His adorable eye always beholds us. Our words, works, and very thoughts, all the secrets of our hearts are open to him. And do we think of it? Alas! did we so, it would be impossible that we should dare to rebel against him.

What! offend our great and bountiful God, even in his presence, at the time when the seraphim are in profound adoration, prostrate at his feet! It would be death to insult our prince to his face; and can it be less than eternal death thus to affront our God? We are ashamed to sin before the eyes of men; and have we no regard to the presence of God, who is the party offended, and who can, that very moment, bind us fast in eternal chains? Suffer me not, O Lord, thus blindly to presume, and ungratefully offend thy sovereign majesty. Let thy divine presence be ever before my eyes, and deeply rooted in my heart, that I may never dare to displease thee any more.

Christians, find out a place where God cannot see you, and you shall have leave to sin. But where will that be? Alas! wherever we are he beholds the pride and vanity of our

souls; he sees our impurities, he sees our slothfulness, and all the malice of our hearts. What shall we have to answer for at the day of judgment, when not a circumstance of our whole life can possibly be hid from our future judge.

Examine yourselves, and always remember that God beholds you. Whenever the devil shall tempt you to sin, let this be your weapon of defence: *God beholds me*. With this weapon Joseph and Susanna maintained their chastity. Place it then always before your eyes—fix it on your doors, and in your hearts. *Sinner, God beholds thee*.

ON THE PRESENCE OF GOD.—CONTINUED.

*Nov. 29.*]—WE need not go far to find God. He is always with us. “In him we live, move, and have our being.”—Acts, xvii. He is with us, to inspire us with his secret graces: he accompanies us in our afflictions, that we may bear them with patience: he is with us in all temptations, for our greater encouragement: he holds a crown over our heads, that we may be sure to conquer. Do we reflect on these truths? Do we fight with courage, as if we saw our God standing by us? Are we as ready to co-operate with him, as he is with us? To our very shame we cannot say it.

God is also *in us*. By his divinity and power he is united to our being, and by his grace he resides within our hearts. Now, are we a fit habitation for such a glorious guest? Are our souls furnished with good works and Christian virtues? Or, rather, are they not still cold and languishing? It is much to be feared that they are? Oh! let us not entertain our God in such an unworthy manner. Since he is pleased to dwell in us, let us seek no comfort but in him alone.

O my God! is it possible that thou shouldst so often think of me, and that I should so seldom think of thee! that thou shouldst perpetually be with me, and that I should never fix

my eyes on thee! that thou shouldst do so much for me, and that I should do nothing for thee! Ah! enliven me with thy grace, that I may never more be guilty of such black ingratitude. "Live, Lord, in whose sight I stand."—2 Kings, xvii.

Examine yourselves, and bearing always in mind that God is *in you*, and *with you*, never offend him by the least sin. Qualify yourselves, by a virtuous life, for his blessed company. Follow his directions; obey his orders; and fail not to consult with him in all your concerns. Pray, with Jeremiah: "Thou, O Lord, art in us, and thy name is invoked upon us, leave us not."—Jer. xiv.

#### ON ST. ANDREW, APOSTLE.

*Nov. 30.*]—St. Andrew, with his brother Peter, was the first of the apostles called by Christ. He was fishing in the sea of Galilee, and no sooner did he hear the voice of Jesus, saying, "Come after me, I will make you a fisher of men," (Matt. iv.) but, without the least demur, he left his net and followed him. Happy resolution! Do we give ear to the voice of Christ, who daily and hourly calls upon us, by his holy inspirations? Do not the nets of the world, wherewith our souls have been long entangled, keep us back? Nothing ought to divert us, if we hope to have a share in the bliss of this saint.

After the resurrection of our Saviour, the apostle, St. Andrew, entered upon his mission. He preached the gospel to the Scythians, Thracians, and through the greater part of Greece. By his doctrine and miracles he converted thousands to the faith of Christ. "God has given the charge of his neighbour to every one."—Eccel. xvii. And have we duly complied with it? Have our lives been edifying? Have they preached good morality to a wicked world?

After great labours endured in the conversion of infidels,

St. Andrew was at length condemned to die: the death of the cross was his decreed martyrdom. He no sooner beheld the happy instrument, than he burst forth into these pious breathings: "O good cross, a long time sought after, and most earnestly desired, receive me now, and conduct me to my Master, who, by dying on thee, purchased my redemption." O the force of love! Do we, like this martyr, desire to suffer in the cause of Christ? Can we say that we are prepared for martyrdom, when we cannot bear the ordinary trials of an injury or contempt? when we cannot submit to the daily inconveniences of human life?

Examine yourselves, and see how near you come to the love, zeal, and courage of this great apostle. Beg of him to join his prayers with yours, that you may be the better able to follow his example.

## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

### ON ADVENT.

*Dec. 1.]*—ADVENT is a time appointed by the church to prepare yourselves for the coming of our Lord. To employ it well, we must enter into the dispositions of the *Word Incarnate* in the womb of Mary. But what are those dispositions? He humbled himself to the lowest degree imaginable, by assuming the form of a sinful man. Blessed Jesus, thou hast humbled thyself even to the astonishment of men and angels. Let us humble ourselves during this time of Advent; let us be resigned to the will of God, and from our hearts rejoice, that we have an opportunity offered of uniting our afflictions to the sufferings of Jesus.

Our Saviour, in the womb, made an entire oblation of himself to God. He consecrated all his thoughts, and all his future words and actions to his eternal Father. Let us do the same, every day of Advent. We have the most endear-

ing instances of an infinite love to engage us to do it. Thrice happy we, who are blessed with a Jesus, and who have it in our power to make this offering.

Our Saviour, in his mother's womb, gives us a lesson of mortification. He was no sooner conceived, than he condemned himself, during the space of nine months, to a dark prison; he condemned himself to misery, as soon as he was born, and after that, to a death of torments. Let us, during this time of Advent, retire from the world, and recollect ourselves, in imitation of our Saviour; let us mortify our passions, and retrench self-love; let us shun all sinful amusements, and whatever is not suitable to a time of penance.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved to practice the mortification, humility, and oblation, which Christ made of himself in the womb of Mary. Call in mind the many Advents you have lost by your sins and slothfulness, in order to spur you on the more vigorously to keep this well.

#### ON THE PRESENCE OF GOD.—CONTINUED.

*Dec. 2.]*—THE bliss of heaven consists in seeing God: and our happiness here on earth is in walking in his presence. The angels, although employed in their ministry, have their eyes on God; we, in the same manner, ought to have our eyes fixed on him in the midst of our affairs. The presence of God is the best remedy against sin; for thousands perish through a forgetfulness of him. It is the greatest step to perfection: "Walk before me, and thou shalt be perfect."—Gen. xvii. Let us do so: let us say, with David, "Lord, I will fix my eyes upon thee."—Ps. xxxi.

There are some Christians who imagine that they see their God standing by them, walking with them, and taking an account of all their actions: others fancy that they see Christ naked in the manger: others, that they see him bleeding in the garden, or dying on the cross. St. Bernard and St.

Bonaventure, and many other saints, chose their dwelling-place in the wounds of their Saviour; and for the express purpose of enjoying his presence. Is this our practice? Whichever way we may follow, let us firmly believe that our God beholds us.

My soul, where art thou? Canst thou reflect that thou art in the presence of thy Lord, and still make him no tender of love? Where are thy pious ejaculations? "O God, incline unto my aid, make haste to help me."—Ps. lxxix. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"—Acts, ix. "Not my will, but thine be done."—Luke, xxii. "What have I in heaven, and what, besides thee, would I have on earth? O the God of my heart, and my portion for ever."—Ps. lxxii.

Examine yourselves, and be very constant in this pious exercise. The better to keep up a lively idea of the presence of God, meditate often, pray much, and offer up all your actions to the glory of God. Consider the time lost, which you do not spend in walking in the presence of God. What more easy than to think of him? What more consoling, when by so doing you may possess a heaven upon earth.

#### ON THE BENEFIT OF OUR CREATION.

*Dec. 3.]*—A FEW years ago we were not in the world: we were covered over in the dark shades of *nothing*. God, through his pure goodness, drew us out of this nothing, having no need at all of us. He has given us a being, the most noble in the world, capable of inheriting everlasting glory. He has given us a soul like to himself, having endowed it with an understanding to know him, a memory to think of him, and a will to love him. And are we thankful for these great favours? He has beautified us with a body, perfect in its senses, and exactly well proportioned in all its members; and do we not make it an instrument of offence! Let us not

be so very ungrateful. The brute beasts will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us at the bar.

Why has God made us what we are? Why did he not form us to the likeness of a stone, plant, or beast? Why has he called us out of the abyss of nothing, and left so many thousands behind, who have as good a title to creation as ourselves? Why are we not, like some of our neighbours, blind, lame, mad, and foolish? His love alone can tell us.

O bountiful Creator! my heart and my all I consecrate to thee, who art the author of it. What return can I make for having drawn me out of nothing, and, through thy infinite mercy, made me what I am? Never will I wander from thee by sin. Every action of my life shall declare thy praise.

Examine yourselves, and make the best return you are able for this benefit of your creation. The end of your creation is to serve God; be, therefore, punctual in it. Take care that you make not the divine gifts the instruments of sin, and of your own damnation. Under all temptations, let this be your shield: "Dust and ashes, what art thou going to do? O very nothing, darest thou to sin?"

#### ON THE BENEFIT OF OUR PRESERVATION.

*Dec. 4.]*—By creation God gave us a being; and by preservation he maintains this being. We have so necessary a dependance on him, that were he to withdraw his preserving hand, we should absolutely fall into our original nothing. The light depends not so much on the sun, as we do on God. See, my soul, how thy God has protected thee, from the day of thy conception to this present moment. See, how he followed thee, when thou fledst from him; and how meekly he bore with thee, when thou didst ungratefully offend him, to thy own destruction. Make him amends by giving him thy heart. He desires no more.



Alas! we cannot breathe, nor stir a hand, nor think, nor do the least thing without the help of God. "In him we live, move, and be."—Acts, xvii. From how many evils does his love preserve us every moment of our lives! How comes it that we are not blind, mad, and leprous, as many in the world are? Why are we not cut off by some sudden or untimely death, as great numbers are? Why are we not overwhelmed with poverty and affliction, and deprived of the conveniences of human life? Christians, it is the divine goodness that has happily preserved us from these misfortunes. Ah! "what return shall I make?"—Ps. cxv.

Consider the frame of the world: look up at the sun, moon, stars, and firmament; view the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the fishes of the sea. These has God created for our preservation. Nor is this all: the blessed angels, those ministering spirits, are ordained to serve us. "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him!"—Ps. viii.

Examine yourselves, and take care you abuse not this benefit of your conservation. So great it is, that it may well be called a perpetual creation. Make a suitable return of your hearts for it. Your loving God calls for no more: "Son, give me thy heart."—Prov. xxiii.

#### ON THE BENEFIT OF OUR REDEMPTION.

*Dec. 5.]*—THE slavery which the Israelites underwent in Egypt and in their captivity at Babylon, was very great; but it was nothing when compared with the oppressing slavery of sin. Under this slavery the world groaned about four thousand years. The faith of Abraham, the meekness of Moses, the penance of David, the tears of Jeremiah, were not sufficient to pay our ransom. Only God could set us free, and he has done it abundantly.

My soul, where art thou? Art thou in ecstasies of love and admiration at so signal a mercy? What would have

become of thee, had not thy Lord thus mercifully redeemed thee? Suppose that thou wert a traitor to thy temporal prince, and being condemned to a cruel death for thy treason, thy prince should take thy place, and out of love die for thee, what wouldst thou think? Be amazed, then, to see thy offended God become thy advocate, and out of his pure love washing away thy sins with his precious blood! Thy Lord could have redeemed thee by a *thought* or a *word*, as he created thee by a *word*. But that would not suffice for his love. No: he must become man, and a poor, afflicted, and despised man: he must be scourged, pierced with thorns, buffeted, spit upon, forsaken by his best friends, and bleed and die upon a cross for thee. “O happy fault of Adam, which has deserved such, and so great a Redeemer.”—*Div. Off.*

Christians, these are signal favours; and are we grateful for them? Can we do too much for him who has wiped away our sins—who has freed us from the slavery of the devil and hell—who has made us the sons of God and heirs of heaven, the partakers of his grace and of all spiritual gifts—who has comforted us with sacraments, and has admitted us to the table of his dear self? Can we do too much for so liberal a benefactor? No: thus, “is there with him a plentiful redemption.”—Ps. cxxxix.

Examine yourselves, and by repeated acts of love, thanksgiving, adoration, and praise, make some return for this great blessing. Often meditate on it: hear mass devoutly; never crucify again your Lord by sin, but, remembering that “you are bought with a great price, glorify and carry your God about you.”—1 Cor. vi.

#### ON THE BENEFIT OF OUR VOCATION.

*Dec. 6.*]—God has not only redeemed us, he has likewise called us to his true faith. What a mercy is this, that *we*

should be called, whilst so many thousands are left in infidelity! How unhappy should we have been, had we known no other god, than those of *stocks and stones*! Let us bless our Lord, who out of his infinite love, has called us by name to his admirable light. Let us never give occasion to infidels for upbraiding us with ingratitude.

What vast numbers also of the Christian world are led away by heresy! And are we not of that number? No: we are brought up in the bosom of the true church: we are fed with the pure milk of the apostles: we are nourished with the blood of Jesus Christ. My soul, what hast thou done to deserve this favour? Again, how many souls fall a prey to sin! How many fall, and never rise again! Is this thy case? Thou hast, it is true, criminally offended, and often relapsed into thy former sins. But thy God has borne with thee, and has raised thee up by a sincere repentance. Even now, he encourages thee, by his multiplied graces, to fight and conquer, that thou mayest be crowned with glory.

How rich in mercy is thy heart, O God! Why hast thou called me to the true faith, to thy holy sacraments, and to all the treasures of the church? Didst thou not know that I should abuse them? Yes: but thy design was love.

Examine yourselves, and be confounded at your wretched forgetfulness of God. Stifle not his inspirations. Make some return for the benefit of your vocation, by a life of humility, and of other virtues. Often reflect within yourselves, how many lost souls would have been saints in heaven, had they had your call. “Wo to thee, Corozain, wo to thee, Bethsaida; for if in Tyre and Sidon those mercies had been wrought, which have been done in thee; long since they had done penance in sackcloth and ashes.”—Matt. xi.

#### ON PERSEVERANCE.

*Dec. 7.]*—PERSEVERANCE to the end is the perfection of virtue: it is the reward of our labours; it is the seed of glory.

“He that perseveres to the end shall be saved.”—Matt. x. The blessed saints, who are now reigning with God in heaven, would never have been there had they not persevered in his service. What was Judas the better for being called to the apostleship, when, for want of perseverance, he died in despair?

The good confessions that we have made, the body and blood of Jesus, which we have so often received, our penitential tears, and liberal alms, our fervent prayers, and rigorous self-denials, will avail us little, if not accompanied with the grace of perseverance. No: we shall die in our sins, and be lost for ever. Will a promising crop be any comfort to the farmer, if his corn be destroyed before the harvest?

Lord, since thou hast been so merciful as to create me to thy likeness, to preserve my being, to redeem me with thy blood, to call me to the true faith, and to give me all opportunities of saving my soul, let not these mercies be bestowed in vain. I detest all sin: let a sincere repentance close my dying eyes. I want no fresh encouragement to persevere in thy service. I have for my reward the promise of heaven, the promise of that bliss which can never enter here the heart of man.

Examine yourselves, and fail not to offer up your sincere prayers for the obtaining perseverance. Daily renew your good resolutions of living well. For that purpose, meditate often, frequent the sacraments, read pious books, and consider every day as if it were to be the last of your lives. “No one will be crowned that has not persevered in the combat.”—2 Tim. ii.

#### ON THE CONCEPTION OF OUR LADY.

*Dec. 8.]*—THE Conception of our Lady was very wonderful. She was conceived without the least spot of original sin. She

no sooner had a being than it was consecrated to God. Are our hearts immaculate? "Christ is to be formed in each of us."—Gal. vi. Are our souls prepared for so great a guest? Does the love of God occupy our thoughts?

It would not have been agreeable to the sanctity of Christ, to have been contained in a body stained with sin; nor would it have been suitable to the wisdom of Christ, to take sinful blood for the expiation of sin; nor with his bounty, to deny his mother the grace of innocence, which costs him little, and honours her so much. No: he could never deny it to her. Nor can it be thought, that she, who from all eternity was predestinated to be the Mother of God, should, either at her conception, or afterwards, have been a captive to the devil. Now, Christians, what reason have we to hope that Christ will take up a dwelling in our hearts, when they are charged with the guilt, not of one, but of many sins: not with the sin of Adam, but with our own voluntary and grievous depravities?

The Blessed Virgin being conceived without sin, she was not subject to those passions of concupiscence to which we are. When did she in the least dishonour her parents? When did she create any disputes among her neighbours? Did she scorn the helpless, or cast off the poor? No; she was humble of heart, chaste in her thoughts, and transported with the love of God and her neighbour. She was considerate in her words, prudent in her actions, and a pattern of every virtue during her whole life. Do we strive against our passions and daily failings? Do we imitate the Virgin by a virtuous life?

Examine yourselves, and honour the Conception of the Virgin Mary. "She is most beautiful, and not a spot is in her."—Cant. iv. Imitate her by a spiritual regeneration from sin, and by a life of virtue.

## ON CONFESSION.

*Dec. 9.]*—“RECEIVE ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained.”—John xx. These are the words of Jesus Christ, delivered to his apostles, and in them to the priests of his apostolic church to the end of the world. We cannot question their power or authority. They are the undisputed judges and physicians of our souls; and therefore are we bound to lay our wounds and guilt before them, when we have the means, as we hope for pardon. To think it enough to confess to God alone, is to evacuate the gospel: it is to “make void the words of Christ.”—*St. Augustin.*

The goodness of God shines no where more bountifully than in this sacrament of reconciliation. What should we have done, had we not been blessed with this expedient of mercy! I fear there are few, who faithfully preserve their baptismal innocence. I fear that we ourselves cannot say that we have never forfeited our title to heaven, by a mortal sin.

Ah! my soul, thou seest what a blessing confession is, and why dost thou slight it? Why dost thou approach to the throne of mercy with such reluctance? Is it an unhappiness to be delivered from the precipice of a miserable damnation? Is it an unhappiness to be restored to the favour of an offended majesty? Is it an unhappiness to be admitted into the fellowship of the saints in heaven? Thou hast dealt unjustly with thy God; and can it be too much to make him satisfaction by so small a humiliation?

Examine yourselves, and conclude with this humble and grateful address: O bountiful God, I adore thy goodness in providing for us this plank after a dangerous shipwreck—this healing balsam to cure our wounds. I am resolved, by thy grace, not to suffer this treasure to be lost: neither fear, shame, nor sloth, shall rob me of it.

## ON FREQUENT CONFESSION.

*Dec. 10.]*—WE are surrounded on all sides with cruel enemies. We must fight and conquer, or we fall a prey to them. This cannot be done without weapons of defence, the best of which is the sacrament of penance. Yes; it disengages our hearts from all affection to sin: it checks our passions: it defeats the enemy: it crowns our conquests. And why do we not frequent it? The repeated exposition of our infirmities to our physician, must be the best means of obtaining a cure: let us not then neglect it.

Go, infernal fiend, I know confession is such a terror to thee, that thou wilt never cease to use thy utmost efforts to make us neglect it. But we will not be seduced. Tempt us not to believe that it is too much trouble, for we will not spare the most difficult labour to save our souls. Strive not to suggest that we are deficient in preparation; for we will do our best, confidently relying on the divine grace, which is always ready to assist us. Never tell us, that we stand not in need of it; for we know that we are poor and miserable, and that our wretched condition causes us to stand in perpetual need of so great a mercy. Lay not before us the business of the world; the affairs of our souls are our principal concern.

Christians, the devil's most subtle artifices shall never prevail on us to neglect this duty. We will frequently confess. No fear, nor shame (the worst and most fatal of his hellish stratagems,) shall be able to seduce us. Where is the shame in seeking a reconciliation with our offended God? If there be any shame, it ought to be in sinning, not in asking pardon. Rather let us expose ourselves to one private person, tied up by all laws to a perpetual secrecy, than be exposed hereafter before the whole world, to our eternal confusion.

Examine yourselves, and be careful to put in practice the profitable resolutions you have made: nothing can conduce

more to your eternal happiness. Never sleep in mortal sin: but ease your consciences by a speedy confession. Under all violent temptations apply this remedy. Let a monthly confession at least be your constant practice.

#### ON PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION.

*Dec. 11.]*—WERE we to be arraigned before a temporal judge to answer the crimes laid to our charge, we should, without delay, enter into an examination of our conduct, and with the greatest diligence, search and see wherein we had transgressed. We should carefully examine what company we had been in, what words we had let fall, and what had been our comportment in every particular. And ought we to be less solicitous in examining our consciences, in calling to mind the grievous sins of our past lives, when we are going to appear before Jesus Christ, in the tribunal of confession?

O Father of lights, do thou direct us in this difficult task. Remove those veils which conceal our sins from us: enlighten our darkness, that we may repent of, and confess all our transgressions.

The arms of God are always open to receive sinners. He has promised them pardon. But it is on condition that they repent: without the sighs of a contrite heart their sins will not be forgiven: confession is invalid if not accompanied with repentance. Alas! can we call to mind our sins and not be sorry for them? Can we reflect how we have ungratefully offended an Almighty God, and not tremble at the thought? Can we think of the unquenchable flames of hell, which we have deserved, and not detest the evil which has caused us to deserve them? “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner: Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.”—Luke, xviii. I detest my sins. It grieves me that I have offended thee. Spare me this time; I am resolved to amend. Despise not, I beseech thee, the cries of thy lost sheep: reject not the sighs of thy prodigal child.



Examine yourselves, and by a serious search, and contrite heart, prepare for confession. Resolve to amend, and to shun all immediate occasions of sin. Lay the axe to the root. Curb your passions by virtuous exercises. Dread a relapse, for nothing can be more pernicious to your dear souls.

#### ON THE METHOD OF CONFESSION.

*Dec. 12.]*—BEING come to the bar, clothed with humility and confusion, we are to make a sincere confession of all mortal sins. No wilful one is to be concealed as to its kind or numbers. No circumstance is to be omitted that changes the nature of the sin, or that considerably aggravates it. No excuses are to be made, or art used, to disguise the truth, or to wrap up things in obscure terms. All must be fully laid open with the greatest candour, as we shall one day have to answer for it, and as we hope to have the sentence of pardon ratified in heaven the same time it is pronounced on earth.

It must certainly be a most impious thing to lie to the Holy Ghost by an unworthy confession. It must be the greatest madness for any Christian thus wilfully to draw down on himself the divine judgments, instead of mercy. And yet, how many are guilty of it! O Lord, deliver us from this crying sacrilege. May we never dare to approach thy tribunal but by a sincere confession, and the necessary dispositions for so great a work.

Confession being over, we are to return from the bar with a hearty thanksgiving to our good God for reversing the sentence of eternal death which stood against us. We are to renew our protestations of fidelity to him. We are to think of the best means of avoiding relapses. We are to betake ourselves to prayer, and to a speedy performance of our enjoined penance. Alas! what is the penance imposed when compared with those

which were laid on the primitive Christians? What is it when balanced with our repeated crimes? Let our lives, therefore, be a perpetual penance.

Examine yourselves, and let nothing be wanting to a good confession. It is a work which requires your particular care. In every part of it beg the grace of God, without which you will certainly miscarry. Ah! what great blessings depend on doing it well! What sad curses follow the abuse of it!

#### ON DEFECTS IN CONFESSION.

*Dec. 13.]*—THERE are many Christians who frequently approach to the sacrament of penance and yet reap but very little profit from it. They easily relapse into their former sins, and are almost as proud and vain as ever. They are still addicted to their darling vices, and on all occasions are ready to indulge their growing passions. What can be the reason of it? Is not confession a sacrament of pardon? Does it not heal the sick souls of sinners? Does it not strengthen them in grace? It does, if worthily received. But these people are addicted to many failings; they are not duly prepared nor disposed to receive it.

How many slightly pass over their examens, taking no farther care than to call to mind the sins which appear at first sight! How many thereupon go immediately to confession without so much as thinking about an act of contrition; or, at last, do the work so imperfectly as to seem rather to mock God than sue for mercy! Is a prayer or two, run over in haste, and perhaps without reflection, a token of a true change of heart? How many accuse themselves in *general* terms only! How many leave the tribunal and think no more of what has passed! How many perform their penance as if it were a thing of no importance! How many carelessly defer it, and even criminally omit it! Will this do?

No wonder that their sins are concealed from them when they go to confession, and that they continue so till they go to the grave. No wonder that their contrition is false, and their confessions unprofitable. No wonder that they relapse, and live and die in sin. Give us, O God, a right sense of our duty. May we never enter upon this great work without due reflection and a careful application.

Examine yourselves, and take care to avoid these too common abuses of many Christians. How many souls are now suffering in purgatory for their neglects in this point! how many in hell for their bad confessions! Learn to grow wise by their misfortunes. Keep as constantly as you can to your usual confessor; he is the physician best able to heal your souls.

ON THE INCARNATION OF OUR LORD.

*Dec. 14.]*—MANKIND had groaned under the weight of sin for about four thousand years, and still continued unable to make satisfaction for the least offence. All the sacrifices ever offered could not efface the guilt of this sinful world. The faith of Abraham, the patience of Job, the penance of David, would not do; nothing but God could satisfy for it. See how the offended turns advocate for the offender. Behold he is become incarnate in the womb of a virgin for us men! Was there ever mercy like this? O heavens, stand astonished at it!

Lord, give us leave to expostulate with thy goodness. Why wouldst thou thus sacrifice thyself for us, poor clay? Wouldst thou have been less happy had we been left in the mass of damnation? No; it was thy love that made thee stoop so low. Rejoice, ye prophets, your sighs and tears have now proved successful. Rejoice, captive saints, the gates of heaven will shortly be opened to you. Rejoice, blessed Virgin, thou bearest thy God in thy sacred womb. Rejoice,

man, thy Redeemer is coming to ransom thy enslaved soul !

Christians, what return do we make for this exceeding great mercy : We certainly must have been abandoned to despair, amidst eternal flames, had not our offended God undertaken our redemption. We can have nothing to fear, now that our God has become incarnate for us. Confide, my soul, in God thy Saviour, who has given thee a title to the kingdom of heaven.

Examine yourselves, and see what the comportment of your lives has been. See whether you have corresponded with these great blessings. Be ever mindful of St. Leo's exhortation : " O Christian soul, acknowledge thy dignity : and now that thou art raised to a participation of the divine nature, scorn to degenerate, or to return, by sin, to thy former baseness."

O SAPIENTIA, ETC.—ANTIPH. FOR DEC. 17.\*

*Dec. 15.]*—" O WISDOM which hast proceeded from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end to end, strongly and sweetly disposing things, come and teach us the way of prudence." With what ardent longings did the ancient patriarchs and prophets wait the coming of their great Deliverer ! With what transports of delight would their souls have been filled, had they enjoyed the happiness of seeing this our day. " Wisdom" has, long since, " proceeded from the mouth of the Most High." The great Deliverer has " been made flesh, and has dwelt amongst us." And what impression does that great event make on our minds ? It " strongly and sweetly disposeth all things" for the salvation of our souls : and what benefit do we derive from it ?

We are, indeed, looking forward to the approaching solemnity, with sentiments of pleasure ; but from what source do those feelings proceed ? Do they proceed from the same which

gave rise to the ardent longings of the patriarchs and prophets? Ah! may we not say, that the world has too great a share in our affections? May we not say, that the festivities and amusements of the season raise our expectations, much more than the grand object of the festivity itself?

O "Wisdom, come and teach us the way of prudence." Thou "proceedest from the mouth of the Most High." Come, and banish from our hearts that *false* prudence, which proceedeth only from the love of earthly things. Thou "reacheest from end to end, strongly and sweetly disposing all things:" come, and strongly exert the influence of thy power, and by the *sweetness* of thy attractions, draw us for ever to the embraces of thy love. O come, and teach us the ways which will bring us securely to thee.

Examine yourselves, and ascertain whether you are preparing for spiritual joys, or for worldly amusements, at this approaching season. Consult the dictates of prudence. "The flesh will profit yon nothing. It is the spirit that quickeneth and giveth life."—John, vi. Seek, therefore, the pure delights of the soul, and they will bring to you the possession of all that is good.

O ADONAI, ETC.—ANTIPIH. FOR DEC. 18.\*

*Dec. 16.]*—"O ADONAI, and Leader of the house of Israel, who didst appear to Moses in the fire of the flaming bush, and give him the law on Sina, come and redeem us with a stretched out arm." If the ancient patriarchs sighed after the coming of their great *Leader*, and, by the dispositions of their souls, were prepared to enlist themselves under his banners, oh! with what ardent sighs ought we to pray that he would come, and be spiritually born in our souls, and redeem us with "a stretched out arm" from our inveterate enemies

He is already come in the flesh. He has appeared to all

men in a *bush*, flaming more intensely than the bush of Moses. He has appeared, surrounded with the flames of his holy love. He has *given us laws*, not in thunder and lightning, as on *Mount Sina*, but in the sweet accents of a father and a friend. Oh! let us listen to his voice. Let us receive him as our *Adonai*, or *He who is*. Let us acknowledge him for our *Leader*. Let us invoke him to come to us spiritually at this approaching season. Let us besech him to come with a “stretched out arm:” for we are surrounded with enemies—enemies, rendered most formidable by their repeated victories over the greater number of our brethren, and by the victories which they have already gained over us.

O, the blindness of mortal men! What is there of greater importance to them than the possession of *Him who is*? Or, what leader ought they to follow in preference to him, who is “the Leader of the house of Israel?” And yet, how few are there, who seriously weigh those things in their minds! Oh! let us be more wise.

Examine yourselves, and see whether you can truly say that the God of Israel is your God:—whether the flames of the *burning bush*, or the follies of the *golden calf*, engage the greater share of your attention; or whether spiritual joys, or worldly festivities, raise your expectation at the approaching season. Oh! “be wise as it behoveth you to be wise;” and seek the things that are alone for your good.

O RADIX JESSE, ETC.—ANTIPH. FOR DEC. 19.\*

*Dec. 17.*]—“O ROOT of Jesse, who standest for a sign to the people, in whose presence kings shall shut their mouths, to whom the Gentiles shall pray; come and deliver us, do not delay.” Oh! how prophetic were the exclamations of the ancient patriarchs! We live in times when the completion of their prophecies is witnessed by all. We see that the “Root of

of Jesse," the "Son of David," is "a sign to all the people," a "sign" for the guidance of all men into the ways of salvation: and not only a *sign*, but the very "way, the truth, and the life," (John, xvi.), by which alone salvation is to be obtained. We see that the most mighty *potentates* have submitted to his holy laws, and in silence and humility have acknowledged him for their king. We see that the *Gentiles*, or all the nations of the earth, invoke his holy name, and have been converted from the worship of idols to "the Lord God."

The prophets saw these things only as it were in a glass, and they were exceedingly rejoiced. We see these things accomplished; and is our joy equal to theirs? Do we look forward to the annual commemoration of that time, when the "Root of Jesse" budded forth, with sentiments worthy to be compared with theirs? Oh! gratitude is expected, not so much when blessings are promised, as when blessings are given. These blessings have been given to us: and shall our gratitude for *blessings* received, be faint and cold, when the hope of those blessings excited such ardent longings in the breasts of those most perfect disciples of a Redeemer to come? And yet, how few amongst us feel as we ought! How few calculate the extent of the mercies of God, manifested in the Incarnation of his Son! Truly may the greater number of us cry out, as if we had not been redeemed: "Come and deliver us, do not delay."

Examine whether you have hitherto duly weighed the importance of the blessings conferred on you by the Incarnation of the Son of God. Set a due value on it henceforward; and prepare for the celebration of the ensuing solemnity, with the same devotion as the ancient prophets would have done, had they enjoyed the happiness of seeing this your day.

O CLAVIS DAVID, ETC.—ANTIPH. FOR DECEMBER 20.\*

*Dec. 18.]*—“O KEY of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel, who openest, and no man shutteth; who shuttest, and no man openeth; come, and take out of prison him that is bound, sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death.” Who is there, my God, that cometh to thee, except he be called by the Father? We, of ourselves, cannot open the door, and introduce whom we will. Thou alone art the “Key of David.” It is thou openest the door to thy chosen servants; and it is thou who shuttest the door against those whose depravity renders them unworthy of thy mercies. “O the depth of the wisdom and mercy of God! how inscrutable are thy judgments! and how unsearchable thy ways!”—Rom. xi.

But, may we not offer up our petitions in favour of those of our fellow-creatures against whom the gates are shut? May we not pray that the “Key of David” would exert its omnipotent power, and open the door to them? May we not pray that the “He, who openeth, and no man shutteth,” would liberate from the prison of error and delusion, and from the prison of worldly pride and carnal concupiscence, that immense multitude, which we see walking on unconcernedly, in the broad road that leadeth to perdition? Truly we may. Oh! then, thou “Key of David,” bring all nations, and all individuals into obedience to the “Sceptre of the house of Israel.” Open to them the gates of mercy, and suffer not the enemy of their souls to shut what thou openest. Oh! consider the multitudes of those unhappy and deluded beings who are “bound, sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death.” Were they to be loosened from their bands, were they to be enlightened, and restored to the liberty of the children of God, they would, at least many of them, praise thee with more sincere lips than we do, who are now sup-



plicating in their favour. Open to them the gates of mercy, and may their sighs of repentance, may their humble hope, may their ardent love, plead before thee in favour of us, who are now pleading in favour of them.

Examine yourselves, and see whether you make it a part of your devotion, to pray for your deluded brethren. You know that they are in error, although, perhaps, involuntarily on their parts. You know that there is only "one Key of David," which openeth the gates to deluded mortals. Pray, therefore, at this time, that the gates may be opened to all, and that not one single individual may be excluded from the mercies which have been purchased for us, by the mystery of our redemption.

O ORIENS, ETC.—ANTIPH. FOR DECEMBER 21.\*

*Dec. 19.]*—"O ORIENT, brightness of eternal light, and Sun of Justice! Come, and enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death." We, who are enlightened with the light of faith, are too apt too flatter ourselves that all is right, and that we have little to fear; but of what service is this light to us? Are our eyes constantly fixed on this "Orient?" Is he the sun that "enlighteneth our steps?" Ah! let us not forget that he is the "Sun of Justice," and that he will not suffer his mercies to be abused. Having imparted to us the gift of *faith*, he expects that we aspire after other gifts,—gifts, which constitute the essence of Christian piety and holiness. For, what will faith profit us, if we fix our affections on worldly things, if we are eager and persevering in our search after the meat that perisheth, and seek but little after that "bread, of which whoever eats shall live eternally?"—John, vi. What will faith profit us, if our only anxiety is for the body, and the *one thing necessary*—the sanctification of our souls—be neglected? Truly does the apostle say, that "faith without works is dead."—James, ii.

Nevertheless, how immense is the multitude of those who

live, as if faith was the only gift necessary for salvation! May we not say that these people are, even now, “sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death?” Ought we not to pray that the great Deliverer would come, and dissipate the shades which hang over them, and unfold to their view “the brightness of the Sun of Justice?” Perhaps, we, ourselves, are of this unhappy number; perhaps it may be said of us, that we do not always walk “in the light of the countenance of our God.”—Ps. lxxxviii. Oh! let us then pray, that “the brightness of Eternal Light may shine upon us, and that the Sun of Justice may henceforward enlighten our steps.”

Examine yourselves carefully, and see how far you are enlightened by the “Sun of Justice.” If you discover that the world is the *sun* to which you look for light: oh! turn away your eyes from that dazzling meteor, that mock-sun, and turn truly and sincerely to the only real sun—the “Sun of Justice,” which will enlighten you in all your ways, and guide you securely into the haven of eternal rest. Let this be your preparatory devotion for the approaching solemnity.

O REX GENTIUM, ETC.—ANTIPH. FOR DECEMBER 22.\*

*Dec. 20.]*—“O KING of the Gentiles, and their desire, the corner-stone, who maketh both one, come and save man, whom thou hast formed out of the slime of the earth.” How great is the difference between the ancient prophets and modern Christians? They, with all the ardour of their souls, invoked the coming of the Messiah. They saw, in spirit, the glories of the Christian empire, and their hearts were rejoiced; they saw, in spirit, this great *king* ruling over the nations of the *Gentiles*, and they knew not how to contain themselves. Oh! with what ardent longings did they wish to see *this our day*.

We see it, and are not rejoiced. We, instead of fervour, feel nothing but coldness and indifference. So far are we from being glad to invite this our *king* to come to us, and so far

from preparing our souls to receive him, that the ministers of the Lord are obliged to exert every power of eloquence to rouse us from our lethargy, and to induce us to fix our thoughts on the great blessings which have been purchased for us. With dispositions like these, can this "King of the Gentiles" be said to be our king? Can he be said to be the object of our desires? Or can we be said to be part of that building of which he is the "corner-stone?"

O Christians! how unworthy are we of that sacred name? Let us begin, now at least, to think seriously; let us throw ourselves at the feet of this great king; let us entreat him to "come and save unworthy man, even we ourselves, whom he has formed out of the slime of the earth." Let us, with sincere sentiments of repentance, address him, in the words of the church: "Remember not, O Lord, our offences, nor those of our parents, and take not revenge of our sins."

Examine yourselves, and ascertain whether the mercies of the Lord make a due impression on your minds. Remember, "the Lord is nigh." Suffer him not to stand at the door of your hearts, and knock; be ready to open to him without delay. Then will he be truly your "king," and he will satisfy every desire of your souls. He will be the "corner-stone" of your spiritual building; and he will effectually save you from all your enemies.

#### ON ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE.

*Dec. 21.]*—St. Thomas was born in Galilee, and made an apostle by Jesus Christ. Our Saviour had been rudely treated at Jerusalem; and the apostles, apprehending the danger of his going up again, endeavoured to dissuade him from it: St. Thomas alone gallantly said, "Let us go and die with him."—John, xi. Do we imitate the resolution of this great apostle? In the calm of prosperity, when all things go well, what is there that we imagine we cannot do? O then we love our

Lord; then we think that nothing can separate us from him. But no sooner do the storms of temptation arise, than our resolutions vanish. We shamefully yield to the corruption of nature, and very far are we from being ready to die with our suffering Lord.

St. Thomas, being informed by the rest of the apostles of our Saviour's resurrection, and that, during his absence, they had all seen him in the midst of them, he would not believe it. Being an apostle as well as they, he expected the same privilege as was granted to them: and as they were allowed the testimony of their senses, he expected the same also. But, when our Saviour appeared to him and said, "Feel my wounds," what did he say? "My Lord, and my God!"—John, xx. Pardon my incredulity. I confess that thou art the Son of the living God, whom I saw expiring upon a cruel cross. I believe that thou art risen. Do we imitate the repentance of this apostle? Ah! how seldom do we cry from our hearts, "My Lord, and my God!"

St. Thomas preached the gospel in the East Indies. He there converted such numbers to the Christian faith, that he is deservedly styled the apostle of that country. After great labours endured in the conversion of those nations, he was put to death, his body being pierced through with lances. Do we die to sin? Are we dead to concupiscence and depraved nature? We must die in this manner, before we can reasonably hope to obtain eternal life.

Examine yourselves, and labour to imitate the courage and repentance of St. Thomas. Read his life, that it may move you to an imitation of his virtues. Beg the concurrence of his efficacious prayers. Pray for those countries which are again relapsed into their former infidelity.

O EMANUEL, ETC.—ANTIPH. FOR DECEMBER 23.\*

*Dec. 22.*]—"O Emanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the expectation of the Gentiles, and their Saviour, come and save us, O Lord our God." Oh, my brethren, let us "sound the trumpet in Sion," (Joel, ii.), for "the day of the Lord is nigh."—Isa. xiii. Let us "cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light."—Rom. xiii. "The Desired of all nations," (Aggeus, ii.), is at hand. Our Emanuel is coming, to be truly an "Emanuel," or "God with us." "Let the mountains and hills sing praise before God:" let "the trees of the country clap their hands," (Isa. lv.), because our Lord and Ruler is about to enter into the kingdom of his inheritance. Another day, and we "shall see the glory of God."—Exod. xvi. "The dews shall descend from heaven, and the clouds shall rain the Just: the earth shall be opened, and bud forth a Saviour."—Isa. xlv.

Are we prepared for the celebration of these awful mysteries? Are we ready to go forth, and meet the chaste Spouse of our souls? Are we disposed to exclaim, with joy and gladness: "He is the great King, and there shall be no end to his reign: he is God, the Mighty, the Father of the World to come, the Prince of peace?"—Isa. ix.

Oh! where is the world? Where are its riches and its pleasures? Are they discarded from our affections? If they are, "we may then live justly and piously, expecting the blessed hope, and coming of our Lord."—Tit. ii. But, if we are still tied to them, although only by one string of our heart, we may depend upon it, that the "Desired of all nations" will not come unto us, and that he will not fill the temple of our souls with glory. Let us remember that, although he is coming to be our "Emanuel," he is coming likewise to be our "King and Lawgiver." His mercies will not be extended to obstinate rebels. He will consider those only as his dutiful

subjects, who are “poor and little, and of a contrite heart, and who tremble at his words.”—Isa. lxvi.

Examine yourselves diligently at this time. The blessings of which you are invited to partake, are of more importance to you than the possession of all the world. “Who is like unto God?” It is this God who is coming to you: and are you disposed and prepared to go forth to meet him? If you turn away from him, “to whom will you go?” It is he who “has the words of eternal life.”—John, vi. Oh! turn away from vanity, and “be converted to the Lord your God.” Then you will exclaim, with the royal prophet: “The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever.”—Ps. lxxxviii.

#### ON THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

*Dec. 23.]*—IN the reign of Augustus Cæsar, emperor of the world, and in the reign of Herod the Great, King of Judea, our merciful Redeemer was born at Bethlehem. Stop, my soul: behold the Eternal Word born an infant-child for thy sake. Adore the heavenly babe; why art thou so backward? Dost thou not hear the choir of angels saluting him with their hymns? Join with them in a “Glory be to God on high.” Dost thou not see the watchful shepherds paying him their homage? With an humble zeal fail not to accompany them.

How rapidly do the tears flow from our dear Saviour’s eyes? Ah! Christians, he weeps for us. Happy tears, more moving than the tongues of men and angels! Happy tears, more powerful with heaven, than all the penitential psalms of David, or lamentations of Jeremiah! Happy tears, which cry much louder, and in a sweeter strain, than the blood of Abel!

Now is the time to sue for mercy. We may truly say, that “heaven is the seat of our dear Lord:” but it is not easy for sinners to have access there. We shall appear before him at the day of judgment, but we shall appear as criminals to be judged. We may, it is true, behold him in our churches, and

in our tabernacles, but, so solicitous is he for the honour of these sacred places, that the least profane behaviour will excite his indignation. But, if we go to him at Bethlehem, nothing is to be apprehended. The most outrageous sinner may have free access. Let his passions be as wild as the wind, let his heart be as hard as stone, the infant Jesus can rectify all. Here it is that the *heavens flow with honey*.

Examine yourselves, and see that you are well prepared to receive your Saviour. Cast off all disorderly affections for the world. Curb your passions, and root out sin by a sincere repentance. Nothing but sin can render you displeasing to Jesus.

#### ON OUR SAVIOUR IN THE STABLE.

*Dec. 24.]*—JESUS was born in a *stable*, because “there was no place for him in an inn.” Is it possible that the Saviour of the world should be deprived of the benefit of a night’s lodging! A ruinous stable! No better accommodation for the God of heaven and earth! for him, who has the treasures of the world at his command! No better company than an ox and an ass, although he has legions of angels waiting his command!

O Jesus, I see the reason of all this. Thou art born in a stable to confound pride—to disengage our hearts from the things of this world, and to fix them on the eternal joys of heaven. Alas! how often hast thou knocked at the door of my heart for a lodging, and I have refused it to thee! How often have I driven thee out when thou hast been there, in order to make place for sin, and the vanities of the world! O grant that I may now effectually receive thee, and never be so ungrateful as to exclude thee any more. Come, blessed Lady, bring thy infant hither; he shall be better lodged than in a stable.

“Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart.”—Matt. xi. These, Christians, are the first lessons our Saviour

teaches us in the stable of Bethlehem. And do we practise them? Are we humble, when in thought, word, and deed, and in our best actions, we are grasping after the applause of men? Are we meek when we cannot submit to a contradiction, and when we are perpetually murmuring upon the least disappointment? No: we do not practise the lessons taught us in the stable.

Examine yourselves, and be resolved effectually to embrace the virtues of humility and meekness, which your infant Jesus teaches you from the stable. Whatever may be your wants, petition for them with confidence at this time. Your Saviour is now reduced to such a state of weakness for the love of you, that he can refuse you nothing.

## ON CHRISTMAS DAY.

### ON OUR SAVIOUR IN THE STABLE.

*Dec. 25.*]—A MANGER for the Redeemer of the world! A manger for our great God, in whose presence the pillars of heaven tremble, and at whose feet the awful angels lay prostrate! A manger his cradle! Straw his sheets! Rags his swaddling clothes! No better furniture in the deepest cold of winter! No warmer clothing for him, who clothes the birds of the air, the beasts of the earth, and all mankind!

Sweetest Saviour! methinks I hear thee calling aloud from the crib: ye rich of the world, learn of me poverty of spirit; and you that are poor, repine not at your low condition. Learn humility, seeing that I am become a companion to beasts. Learn to be patient, seeing me exposed to the rigour of the elements. Learn the love of your neighbour, since I am made man to save your souls. Learn to despise the world, as I have done.

Dear Jesus! we hear thy voice, but we can do nothing without the help of thy grace. Give that grace, we beseech



thee, to us, helpless creatures, that we may vigorously carry on the work of our redemption, which thou hast so happily begun, that we may renounce all vanity, mortify our passions, deny our will, bear our crosses, love our neighbour, and, in all our works, seek thy glory. Thus, my soul, wilt thou begin a *Christmas* which shall never end.

Examine yourselves, and reflect how many Christmasses you have passed over unregarded; how many you have devoted to gluttony and excess, instead of love and gratitude. Now, at least, be resolved to reform past abuses. Since your infant Jesus challenges your affections, generously surrender them, and make your lives a perfect copy of his virtues.

#### ON ST. STEPHEN.

*Dec. 26.]*—St. Stephen was the first that died a martyr for the faith of Christ. The time, the place, his courage, the instruments of his death, all concurred to render his martyrdom the more illustrious. His death was soon after the crucifixion of our Lord. Jerusalem was the place, one of the greatest theatres of the world. His courage manifested itself in baffling the learned, and patiently submitting to the fury of the ignorant. A discharge of stones was the instrument of his death.

No wonder, great saint, that you did “signs and wonders among the people,” having thus maintained the cause of Christ. No wonder that you were so full of grace and charity, when so full of faith. You have truly deserved to see the heavens open, and “Jesus sitting at the right hand of his Father,” ready to crown your conquests. Christians, let us honour this first martyr.

“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,” was the dying prayer of this glorious saint.—Acts, vii. Oh! the effects of a perfect charity! His prayer was heard: it soon after wrought

the conversion of Saul, who wounded him by the hands of all that stoned him. Are we prepared to die for Christ, when we are daily sinking under some cross or other, and fretting at every little disappointment? Do we imitate St. Stephen in praying for his enemies, when our hearts are so full of resentment and revenge? when, instead of patiently receiving the stones thrown at us, we send them back with greater fury?

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to imitate St. Stephen's courage and love for his neighbour. Choose him for your patron: he is a powerful advocate. Nothing can be denied him now, who, while on earth, did such "signs and wonders among the people."—Acts, vi.

#### ON ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

*Dec. 27.]*—St. John, the son of Zebedee, and brother to St. James, the elder, was called to the apostleship by Jesus Christ. He was called in the flower of his age, at a time when nature is bent on pleasures, and most averse to the rigours of penance. Notwithstanding this, he left the world, his nets, and friends, and with his brother James, ever after remained a disciple of Christ. The Holy Ghost calls upon us every day of our lives: let us listen to him—the happiness of our souls depends upon it.

St. John was the beloved disciple of our Lord. He was favoured with the sight of the most remarkable passages of his Master's life; he saw his transfiguration on Mount Thabor; he made up one of his number at the last supper, and had the privilege to lean upon his dear Lord's breast. Great Saint! what rays of love must have darted from thy Saviour's to thy virgin heart! It must have melted with love. But what qualified thee for receiving so great a favour? Thy unspotted chastity. It was that purity of heart, without which no one shall see

God. What are our hearts? Are they not defiled with beastly impurities? Do they not criminally lust after the love of creatures? This is not to imitate St. John.

St. John would have died by martyrdom, like the rest of the apostles, had not God delivered him from the vessel of "boiling oil" into which he was cast. He wrote the Gospel, and, therefore, he is called an Evangelist. He left us three Epistles, and his divine Revelations. "My children, love one another," was his constant exhortation. Let us endeavour to practise this golden rule.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to walk in the steps of St. John the Evangelist. Pray for those who teach and read his gospel, that they may profit by it. Imitate his chastity and love of Jesus.

#### ON HOLY INNOCENTS.

*Dec. 28.]*—THE barbarous Herod, who had impiously usurped the crown of Judea, and whose jealous and proud spirit ever trembled at the thoughts of a successor, hearing that a King of the Jews was born within the territories of Bethlehem, gave orders that all the male children thereabouts, from two years old and under, should be put to death, in order that he might be certain not to miss the infant Jesus. Bloody Herod! in vain hast thou sought thy young Lord's life. Thy malice cannot prevail against the power of heaven. The innocent blood which thou hast spilt shall, like the blood of Abel, cry for vengeance against thee.

What a distressing scene must it have been to behold these innocent babes torn from the grasping arms of their parents, and cruelly ripped up before their eyes! How many were stabbed in the very embraces of their mothers! How many mothers, interposing themselves, had their own blood mingled with that of their infants! "A voice was heard in Rama

of much weeping and lamentation ; Rachael mourning her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.”—Mat. ii. Bethlehem, thou hast far more reason to rejoice than weep, seeing thou hast offered so early a sacrifice to thy Redeemer. How many of thy children are now saints in heaven, who, had they lived, might, with their fathers, have crucified their Jesus, and been unhappy victims of the flames of hell !

Have we taken part in the massacre of Herod ? Innocents may be murdered by sinful enticements—by a scandalous life—by excessive fondness—undue education—in being suffered to grow up in an unfortunate ignorance.

Examine yourselves, and see if you stand guilty of sins and murders of this nature. Desire the Holy Innocents to intercede for you, that you may obtain or preserve the grace of innocence. “Unless you become as little children ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”—Mat. xviii.

#### ON ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY.

*Dec. 29.]*—St. Thomas was a native of London. His singular endowments in piety and learning raised him to the dignity of Archbishop of Canterbury, and Primate of England. He zealously performed the functions of a good pastor. He so resolutely maintained the privileges of the Church, that neither the menaces of his prince, nor the solicitations of his friends, nor his own misfortunes, nor death itself, could induce him to give up the cause of God and the Church. A rare example of holy resolution !

Christians, it is our duty to espouse the cause of Jesus Christ. Our creation, redemption, baptismal promises, our eternal interests, oblige us to it ; and yet, can we say that the threats, and charms, and solicitations of the world, prevail not over duty ? Alas ! how often do we abandon our good resolutions, through a too yielding compliance with the impor-

tunities of friends ! How often, out of a cowardly fear of what the world will say, do we basely betray the cause of Christ ! This is not the way to imitate the unshaken resolution of St. Thomas of Canterbury.

St. Thomas, after a hard and afflicting banishment, was recalled home ; but, as it proved, to die a martyr. He was, a short time after, murdered in his cathedral church during the hour of vespers. How did he die ? “ Why,” said he to his clergy, “ do you guard the doors ? Is the church a citadel ? Let my executioners in. I am prepared to submit my head to their swords for the Church of God.” Thus did he die. Great saint, we are amazed at your undaunted courage. O that we could but imitate it. We fear that there has long continued a scourge upon our island for shedding your blood.

Examine yourselves, and see if your lives bear any resemblance to the life of St. Thomas. Beseech him to assist you and your afflicted country, miserably overgrown with the tares of sin. He is your patron.

#### ON THE CONCLUSION OF THE YEAR.

*Dec. 30.]*—ANOTHER year of our lives is elapsed. It is gone. It hath disappeared like a shadow, and not left a trace behind. When we look back upon it, how short doth it appear. It seems but as yesterday when it commenced ; and it is already at an end. This next year, and all our years, will pass in the same manner, and have we yet seriously begun to live ? How many years we have yet remaining is a secret hidden from our eyes. Perhaps we may have many years to come. Perhaps not one. This next year may be our last. It will be the last to many thousands who now think as little of it as we do ourselves ; and who amongst us can say that he will not be of the number ?

O Christians, set your house in order without delay. You have much to do before you will be prepared to give an

account of your stewardship. Take a review of this last year. Examine the extent of the debts which you have contracted with God by sin ; and likewise, all that you have done to cancel them. Probably not a day has passed but you have offended in many things. Perhaps you have accumulated a treasure of wrath by the commission of many *mortal* sins. And can you flatter yourselves that the sincerity and severity of your repentance has cancelled them all ? Can you entertain a well-founded hope that every deficiency has been made good, and that there is no balance against you in the settlement of these important accounts ? Happy will it be for you if this be the case.

But this is not all. Talents were given to you, not merely to be restored undiminished, but to be improved. You are expected, by their means, to acquire other talents. The graces which the Almighty imparted to you this last year were to be put to good use. You were, by their assistance, to advance in virtue, and to become more perfect. Can you, then, say that you are more devout than you were this time last year ? That you are more temperate—more chaste—more humble and meek—more in earnest in the great work of your salvation ? Do you perceive that your hearts are more inflamed with the love of God and your neighbour ? Oh ! enter into this examination with earnestness ; for, by ascertaining the true state of your souls, you will see what you have to do during the ensuing year.

Examine yourselves carefully and diligently on these points. Your time, perhaps, is short, and your *ALL for eternity* depends on being ready to give in your accounts when the awful summons for your trial shall be delivered to you.

#### ON ST. SYLVESTER.

*Dec. 31.]*—SAINT Sylvester was Bishop of Rome. Under his pontificate the Church was restored to peace after a perse-

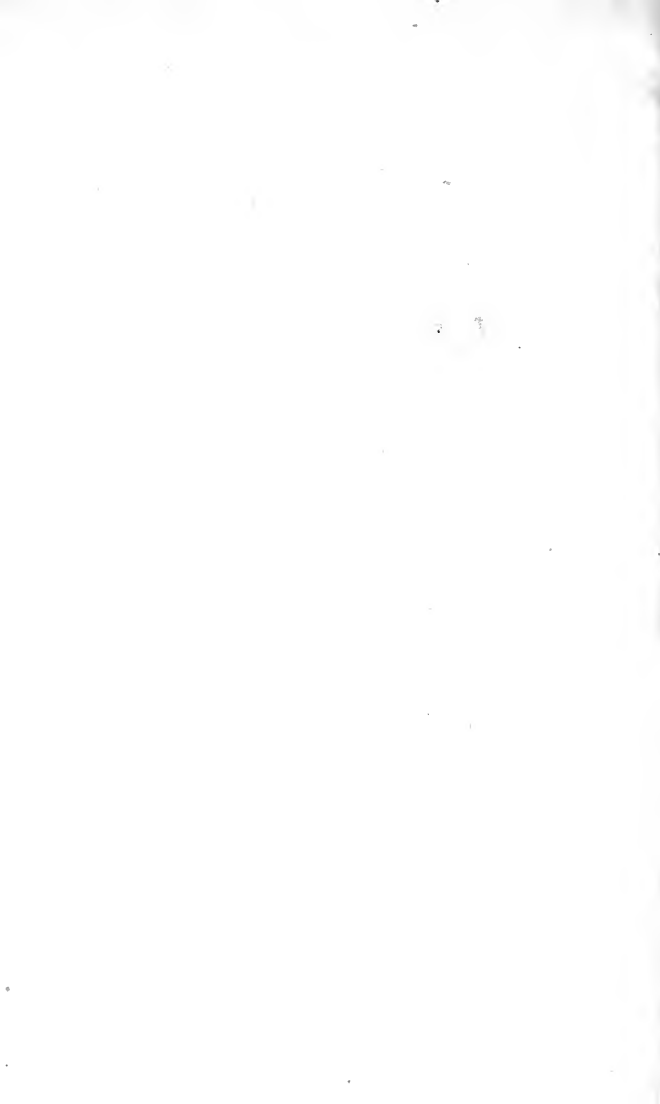
cution of three hundred years. Now were the idols thrown down, and churches built to the living God. Now did the saints, who had hid themselves in rocks and caves, publicly and freely preach the faith of Christ. O God, we give thee thanks that thou hast established thy Church, and made us sinners members of it. We might have been lost in infidelity, hadst thou not at this time appeared to the world. Thou hast mercifully overthrown the idols of unbelievers ; grant that we may never set up an idol in our hearts.

Christians, do we carry no idol in our breasts? Have we never sacrificed to pride, ambition, gluttony, or lust? Have we no darling sin that we make an idol of? Have we erected no altar to a vain world? We may assure ourselves that the heathenish idols are less abominable in the sight of God.

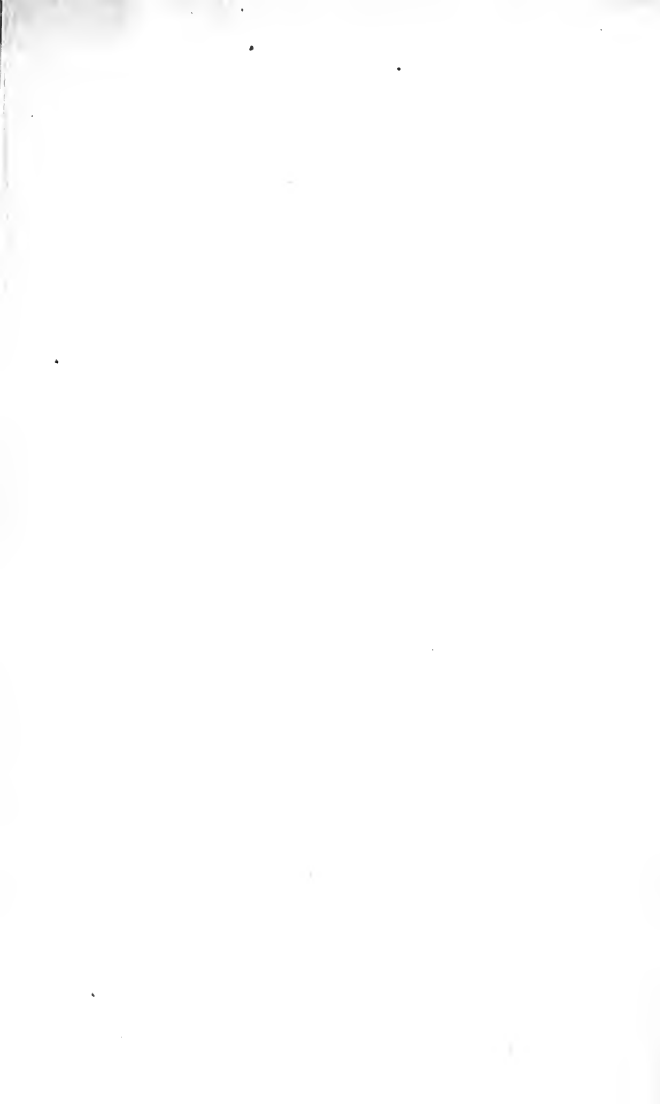
It is to the zeal of St. Sylvester that we are, in great measure, indebted for the condemnation of the blasphemies of Arius. Let us join in his condemnation by a life of humility, self-denial, and obedience ; for it is by *faith* and a *good life* that we are to espouse the cause of Jesus Christ. Were I to have “ faith strong enough to move mountains, it would profit me nothing without charity.” St. Sylvester having governed the Church with great prudence and piety for many years, at length rendered up to God his blessed soul in peace. O glorious Confessor, pray for us.

Examine yourselves, and beseech this saint and pastor of souls to pray for the flock he has left behind him. See what benefit you have reaped from the graces of God, and beg pardon for your past ingratitude. Effectually resolve now to end, with the year, all the disorders of it.

THE END.









BOWES, Robert.

Practical reflections  
for everyday.

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